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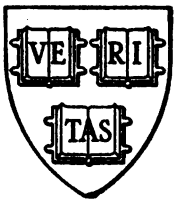

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THE

MEANING OF HISTORY.

Two Lectures.

BY

FREDERIC HARRISON, M.A.

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Yours very truly

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PREFACE.

The following pages contain two lectures recently addressed to a mixed audience in London, as an introduction to a course of teaching in History, which was subsequently commenced by the writer. They are printed (nearly as they were spoken) at the request and chiefly for the use of those who heard them. It will be seen that they belong to the most elementary kind of popular instruction, and they will have little interest for the general reader, much less for the regular student of history. I was led to attempt the course of lectures, and afterwards to print these pages, by my conviction that the first want of our time is the spread amongst the intelligent body of our people of solid materials to form political and social opinion. To stimulate an interest in history seems to me the only means of giving a fresh meaning to popular education, and a higher intelligence to popular opinion.

I am aware that nearly every sentence in this outline, were it not too slight, might give room for serious question, and possibly for severe criticism. But if opposite opinions are not noticed, they have still been carefully weighed. If I have spoken of many still debated topics almost as though they were decided, it is only because in such a plan as this any sort of controversy is out of place, not that I forget or slight all that has been urged on the other side. But discussion, like research, must have an end

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somewhere, and the great need now is not to increase but to use our stores of historical learning. After all, the only real answer to any theory of history, professing to be complete and not manifestly inconsistent, is the production of a counter theory at once more complete and consistent. The view of history here put forward it will be seen is in no sense my own. It is drawn with some care from the various writings of Auguste Comte. Although far from being able to adopt all his philosophical and religious conclusions, I am persuaded that the conception of the past, which is embodied in his works, and the political and social principles of which that conception forms the basis, point out the sole path towards all future improvement.

F. H.

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THE MEANING OF HISTORY.

LECTURE I.

THE USE OF HISTORY.

The question for which we are about to seek an answer is this:—What is the use of historical knowledge? Is an acquaintance with the events, with the men, with the ideas of the past, of any real use to us in these days? has it any practical bearing upon the happiness and conduct of each of us in life?

Now, it must strike us at once, that two very different, nay, contradictory answers may be given, in fact, are very frequently given, to this question. But, opposite as they are, I hardly know from which I more thoroughly dissent. Some persons tell you roundly, that there is no use at all. We are, they would say with Bacon, the mature age of the world; with us lies the gathered wisdom of ages. To waste our time in studying exploded fallacies, in reproducing worn-out forms of society, or in recalling men who were only conspicuous because they lived amidst a crowd of ignorant or benighted barbarians, is to wander from the path of progress, and to injure and not to improve our understandings. What can be the good to us, they ask, of the notions of men who thought that the sun went round the earth; who would have taken a steam-engine for a dragon or a hippogriff, and had never even heard of the rights of man? On the other hand, the other class of

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persons would say of historical knowledge, that it has fifty different uses. It is very amusing to hear what curious things they did in by-gone times. It is highly entertaining to know about forefathers of our own who were nearly as funny as Chinese. Then, again, it is very instructive as a study of character; we see in history the working of the human mind and will. Besides, it is necessary to avoid the blunders they committed in past days: there we collect a store of moral examples, and of political maxims; we learn to watch the signs of the times, and to be prepared for situations whenever they return. And it cannot be doubted, they add, that it is a branch of knowledge, and all knowledge is good. To know history, they conclude, is to be well-informed, is to be familiar with some of the finest examples of elegant and brilliant writing.

Now, between the two, those who tell us plainly that history is of no use, and those who tell us vaguely that history is of fifty uses, I do not see much to choose. I thoroughly disagree with them both, and of the two I would rather deal with the former. Their opposition, at any rate, is concentrated into a single point, and may be met by a single and a direct answer. To them I would say, Are you consistent? Do you not in practice follow another course? In rejecting all connection with the facts and ideas of the past, are you not cutting the ground from under your own feet? You are an active politician and a staunch friend of the principles of the liberal party. What are the traditional principles of a party but a fraction, small, no doubt, but a sensible fraction of history? You are a warm friend of free trade. Well, but free trade has a history of its own; its strength lies in the traditions of a great victory achieved by right over might. You believe in the cause of progress. But what is the cause of progress but the extension of that civilization, of that change for the better which we have all witnessed or have learned to recognize as an established fact? Your voice is always

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heard for freedom. Well, but do you never appeal to Magna Charta, to the Bill of Rights, to the Reform Bill, to American Independence, or the French Revolution? You will suffer no outrage on the good name of England. You are ready to cover the seas with armaments to uphold the national greatness. But what is the high name of England if it is not the memory of all the deeds by which, in peace or war, on sea or land, England has held her own amongst the foremost of the earth? Nor is it true that you show no honours to the men of the past, are not guided by their ideas, and do not dwell upon their lives, their work, and their characters. The most turbulent revolutionary that ever lived, the most bitter hater of the past, finds many to admire. It may be Cromwell, it may be Rousseau, or Voltaire, it may be Robert Owen, it may be Thomas Paine, but some such leader each will have; his memory he will revere, his influence he will admit, his principles he will contend for. Thus it will be in every sphere of active life. No serious politician can fail to recognize that, however strongly he repudiates antiquity, and rebels against the tyranny of custom, still he himself only acts freely and consistently when he is following the path trodden by earlier leaders, and is working with the current of the principles in which he throws himself, and in which he has confidence. For him, then, it is not true that he rejects all common purpose with what has gone before. It is a question only of selection and of degree. To some he clings, the rest he rejects. Some history he does study, and finds in it both profit and enjoyment.

Or, again, let us suppose such a man to be interested in any study whatever, either in promoting general education, or eager to acquire knowledge for himself. Well, he will find, at every step he takes, that he is appealing to the authority of the past, is using the ideas of former ages, and carrying out principles established by ancient, but not forgotten thinkers. If he studies geometry he will find

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the first text book put into his hand was written by a Greek two thousand years ago. If he takes up grammar, he will be only repeating rules taught by Roman schoolmasters and professors. Or is he interested in art? He will find the same thing in a far greater degree. He goes to the Museum to see the stuffed birds or the fossil reptiles, and he walks into a building which is a good imitation of a Greek temple. He goes to the Houses of Parliament to hear a debate, and he enters a building which is a bad imitation of a mediæval town-hall. Or, again, I might say to him, does he never read his Shakespeare or Milton; feel no respect for the opinions of Bacon or of Hume, or Adam Smith? I know that he does. I know that such a man the moment he takes a warm interest in anything—in politics, in education, in science, in art, or in social improvement—the moment that his intelligence is kindled, and his mind begins to work, that moment he is striving to throw himself into the stream of some previous human efforts, to identify himself with others, and to try to understand and to follow the path of future progress which has been traced out for him by the leaders of his own party or school. Therefore, I say that such a man is not consistent when he says that history is of no use to him. He does direct his action by what he believes to be the course laid out before him; he does follow the guidance of certain teachers whom he respects.

I have then only to ask him on what grounds he rests his selection; why he chooses some and rejects all others; how he knows for certain that no other corner of the great field of history will reward the care of the ploughman, or bring forth good seed. In spite of himself, he will find himself surrounded in every act and thought of life by a power which is too strong for him. If he chooses simply to stagnate, he may, perhaps, dispense with any actual reference to the past; but the moment he begins to act, to live, or to think, he must use the materials presented to him, and,

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so far as he is a member of a civilized community, so far as he is an Englishman, so far as he is a rational man, he can as little free himself from the influence of former generations as he can free himself from his personal identity; unlearn all that he has learnt; cease to be what his previous life has made him, and blot out of his memory all recollection whatever.

Let us suppose for a moment that any set of men could succeed in sweeping away from them all the influences of past ages, and everything that they had not themselves discovered or produced. Suppose that all knowledge of the gradual steps of civilization, of the slow process of perfecting the arts of life and the natural sciences were blotted out; suppose all memory of the efforts and struggles of earlier generations, and of the deeds of great men, were gone; all the landmarks of history; all that has distinguished each country, race, or city, in past times from others; all notion of what man had done, or could do; of his many failures, of his successes, of his hopes; suppose, for a moment, all the books, all the traditions, all the buildings of past ages, to vanish off the face of the earth, and with them the institutions of society, all political forms, all principles of politics, all systems of thought, all daily customs, all familiar arts; suppose the most deep-rooted and most sacred of all our institutions gone; suppose that the family and home, property, and justice, were strange ideas without meaning—in a word, that all the customs which surround us each from birth to death—aye, and beyond death, in the grave—were blotted out; suppose a race of men whose minds, by a paralytic stroke of fate had suddenly been deadened to every recollection, to whom the whole world was new—can we imagine, if we can imagine it, a condition of such utter helplessness, confusion, and misery—such a race might retain their old powers of mind and of activity, nay, both might be increased tenfold, and yet what would it profit them? Can we conceive such a

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race acting together, living together, for one hour? They would have everything to create. Would any two agree to adopt the same custom, and could they live without any? They would have all the arts, all the sciences, to reconstruct anew; and how would their tenfold intellect help them there? Even with minds of the highest order it would be impossible to think, for the world would present one vast chaos; even with the most amazing powers of activity, they would fall back exhausted from the task of reconstructing, reproducing everything around them. Had they the wisest teachers or the highest social or moral purposes, they would all be lost and wasted in an interminable strife, and continual difference; for family, town, property, society, country, nay, why not language itself, would be things which each would be left to create for himself, and each would create in a different manner. It would realize, indeed, the old fable of the tower of Babel; and the insane pride of self be followed by shameful confusion and dispersion, and a race with ten times the intellect, twenty times the powers, and fifty times the virtues of any race that ever lived on earth would end, within a generation, in a state of hopeless barbarism; the earth would return to the days of primeval forests and swamps, and man descend almost to the level of the monkey and the beaver.

Now, if this be true, if we are so deeply indebted and so indissolubly bound to preceding ages, if all our hopes of the future depend on a sound understanding of the past, I cannot fancy any knowledge more important, nay, so important, as the knowledge of the way in which this civilization has been built up. If at once the destiny of our race and the daily action of each of us are so completely directed by it, surely the useful existence of each depends much upon a right estimate of that which has so constant an influence over him, will be advanced as he works with the working of that civilization, above him, and around him, will be checked as he opposes it; it depends upon this that he mistakes none

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of the elements that go to make up that civilization as a whole, and sees them in their due relation and harmony.

And now this brings me to that second class of objectors of whom I spoke; those who, far from denying the interest of the events of the past, far from seeing no use at all in their study, are only too ready in discovering a multitude of reasons for it, and at seeing in it a variety of incongruous purposes. If they tell us that it furnishes us with parallels when similar events occur, I should say that similar events never do and never can occur in history. The history of man offers one unbroken chain of constant progress and change, in which no single situation is ever reproduced. The story of the world is played out like a drama in many acts and scenes, not like successive games of chess, in which the pieces meet, combat, and manœuvre for a time, and then the board is cleared for another trial, and they are replaced in their original positions. Political maxims drawn crudely from history may do more harm than good. You may justify anything by a pointed example in history. It will show you instances of triumphant tyranny and triumphant tyrannicide. You may find in it excuses for any act or any system. What is true of one country is wholly untrue of another. What led to a certain result in one age, leads to a wholly opposite result in another. Then as to character, if the sole object of studying history is to see in it the workings of the human heart, why that is far better studied in the fictitious creations of the great masters of character, in Shakespeare, in Molière, in Fielding, and Scott. Macbeth and Richard are as true to nature as any name in history, and give us an impression of desperate ambition more vivid than the tale of any despot in ancient or modern times. Besides, if we read history only to find in it picturesque incident or subtle shades of character, we run as much chance of stumbling on the worthless and the curious as the noble and the great. A Hamlet is a study in interest perhaps exceeding

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all others in fiction or in fact, but we shall hardly find that Hamlets have stamped their trace very deep in the history of mankind. There are few lives in all human story more romantic than that of Alcibiades, and none more base. Some minds find fascination in the Popish plots of Titus Oates, where the interest centres round a dastardly ruffian. The bullies, the fops, the cut-throats, and the Jezebels who crowded the courts of the Stuarts and the Georges, have been consigned to permanent infamy in libraries of learned and of brilliant works. Brilliant and ingenious writing, alas, has been the bane of history; it has degraded its purpose, and perverted many of its uses. Histories, aye, famous histories, have been written, which are little but minute pictures of scoundrelism and folly triumphant. Wretches, who if alive now would be consigned to the gallows or the hulks, have only to take, as it is said, a place in history, and generations after generations of learned men will pore over their lives, collect their letters, their portraits, or their books, search out every vile fact in their lives with prurient inquisitiveness, and chronicle their rascalities in twenty volumes. Such stories, some may say, have a human interest! Well, so has the *Newgate Calendar* a human interest of a certain kind. Why, I should like to ask, is it supposed to show a low taste to enjoy the exploits of Dick Turpin and Jonathan Wild, and yet it should be thought a highly refined and useful pursuit to be deep in the mysteries of all the masquerades in which some crowned wretch like Charles II. or Louis XV. passed his nothingness? Brilliant writing, indeed, is a most delusive guide. In search of an effective subject for a telling picture, men have wandered into strange and dismal haunts. We none of us choose our friends on such a plan. Why, then, should we choose thus the friends round whom our recollections are to centre? We none of us wish to be intimate with a man simply because he is a picturesque-looking villain, nor do we bring to our firesides men who

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have the reputation of being the loudest braggarts or keenest sharpers of their time. Well, let it be the same in our reading. Let us drive out from about us those whose only merit is that they are strange or picturesque. Let not our histories be polluted by their presence, let not these unholy figures intrude into the worthy fellowship of the good and great of former days, who we may almost fancy sit "holding high converse" in grave and solemn conclave together. No, history read upon such a plan is worse than nothing. You are quite right if you pass by untouched these piles of memoirs of the unmemorable—these lives of those who never can be said to have lived. Pass them all by in contempt and pity—these riotings and intrigues, and affectations of worthless men and worthless ages. Better to know nothing of the past than to know only its follies, though set forth in eloquent language and with attractive anecdote. What good can come of such a knowledge? What can it profit you in your daily life, how are you a better or a happier man, because you know the names of all the kings that ever lived, or let me say rather existed, and the catalogue of all their whims and vices, and a minute list of their particular weaknesses, with all their fools, buffoons, mistresses, and valets? You had better learn the *Peerage* by heart, and know the names of the grandfathers and grandmothers of our hereditary rulers. Why not be able to repeat the *Court Circular?* Why is not such knowledge just as human, and just as valuable, and far more harmless than that contained in histories in which the foreground is filled by any villain that wore a crown or a coronet, and the brightest colours of the palette are lavished on a pantaloon whose buffooneries have attracted the eyes of a crowd? Or, again, some odd incident becomes the subject of the labour of lives, and fills volume after volume of ingenious trifling. Some wretched little squabble is exhumed, utterly unimportant in itself, utterly unimportant

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for the persons that were engaged in it, utterly trivial in its results. Lives are spent in raking up old letters to show why or how some parasite like Sir T. Overbury was murdered, or to unravel some plot about a maid of honour, or a diamond necklace, or some conspiracy to turn out a minister, or to detect some court impostor. Why, libraries could be filled with all the dreary wrangling as to who was the Man in the Iron Mask, or who was the author of *Junius*, or who was Pope Joan? Who in the world wants to know? Why do men not exercise their ingenuity on something worth knowing? Why not discover the author of the last mysterious murder, or unveil the secrets of some public job? There are plenty of things to find out, or if people are afflicted with a morbid curiosity, there are surely Chinese puzzles or chess problems left for them to make out without ransacking the public records and libraries to find out which out of a nameless crowd was the most unmitigated scoundrel, or who it is that must have the credit of being the author of some peculiarly venomous or filthy pamphlet? Why need we have six immense volumes to prove to the world that you have found the villain, and ask them to read all about him, and explain in brilliant language how some deed of darkness, or some deed of folly really was done? Why all this? Let it be unknown—let the dark thing remain dark—let them all rot together.

And they call this history. This goodly serving up in spiced dishes of the clean and the unclean, the wholesome and the noxious; this plunging down, without a lamp to guide them, into the charnel-house of the great graveyard of the past, and stirring up the decaying carcases of the outcasts and malefactors of the race. What good can come of such a work? Without plan, without purpose, without breadth of view, and without method; with nothing but a vague desire to amuse, and a morbid craving for novelty. Do you suppose such a knowledge

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can teach you anything? Do you think it can touch the heart? Do you gather from it incentive to action? Do you not feel you might as well be reading bad novels or trashy newspapers? Would you not learn as much from a trial for murder or a trial of divorce? I would call all such, not histories, but police reports. I would call such writers, not historians, but paragraph writers. Have nothing to do with such. If there is one common purpose running through the whole history of the past, if that history is the story of man's growth by one unceasing progress in dignity, and power, and goodness, if the gathered knowledge and the gathered conscience of past ages does control us, support us, inspire us, then is this trifling with the blots and flaws of this great whole, this commemorating these parasites and offscourings of the human race worse than pedantry or folly. It is filling us with an unnatural contempt for the greatness of the past, it distorts our conception of that greatness, it is committing towards our spiritual forefathers the same crime which Ham committed against his father Noah. Is it not a kind of sacrilege to the memory of the great men to whom we owe all we prize, that we waste our lives in poring over the acts of the puny creatures who only encumbered *their* path, who were traitors to *them*, to *us*, and to our *kind?* Is it not the most wanton ingratitude and meanness to feel no thought for, no reverence for, those long labours, those great deeds of daring, endurance, magnanimity, and genius, by which the earth has been smoothed for us, and civilization age after age wrought out for us, and to think only of some puerile wrangle which has dishonoured or retarded the great work? Men on the battle-field or in their study, by the labour of their brains or of their hands, have given us what we have, and made us what we are; a noble army who have done battle with evil barbarism and the powers of nature, martyrs often to their duty; yet are we to turn with indifference from

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the story of their long march and many victories, and find amusement amidst the very camp followers and sutlers who hang upon their rear. If history has any lessons, any unity, any plan, let us turn to it for this and for this alone. Let this be our test of what is history and what is not, that it teach us something of the great advance of human progress, that it tells us of some of those mighty spirits who have left their mark on all time, that it shows us the nations of the earth woven together in one purpose, or is lit up with those great ideas and those great purposes which have kindled the conscience of mankind. If not, we shall be like him in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, who is seen raking amidst straw and litter, whilst an angel is offering him a crown he will not reach forth his hand to take.

It is in a very different spirit, I know, that you are prepared to look at history. You want to see how it may be made a part of *education*—the moral training of a rational man. About the importance, the meaning, and duty of education we surely shall all agree. It is to a wise education to which men turn in the break up of all old systems, creeds, and parties. Why else are we here to-night? You have not come here to pass an idle hour. I have not the wish if I had the power to make it pass pleasantly, unless we both came with a purpose. Your presence, then, our presence together in a place of education, a place designed to extend the benefit of wider popular education, witnesses that *this* is the end to which we look. Why are we here, except it is that we all share the conviction which grows stronger day by day, that only as education grows amongst us, wider, more universal, more sound, more moral, with higher aims and broader foundations, will true progress in public or private life be won. Have you not all, in the failure of your most ardent hopes, in the baffling of your best efforts, in the consciousness of want of true knowledge and guidance, in despair over social miseries and social wrongs, have you not often, I

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say, turned back and felt within you that, until better and truer knowledge was spread abroad to all, all hopes were deceitful and all efforts in vain? Has not every one of you who ever believed in or laboured for a political cause or a public measure, who has stood by some principle of social good, some temperance movement, some sanitary scheme, some educational plan, who has ever longed for or worked for a happier feeling to spring up between the classes of employers and employed, or rich and poor, still more each one of you who has ever thought to see old superstitions fall, and the strife of sects, churches, and creeds end in a fraternal union of men in one common work; has not every one who has ever done or felt this, had from time to time the bitterness of seeing that his political principles made no way, that misunderstanding still abounded, that bigotry, spite, intolerance, ignorance, brutal ignorance or coarseness, old prejudices, new jealousies, and general apathy, divergence, and confusion were not so easily to be done away? Has he not felt that acts of parliament, movements, plans, and societies of all sorts were paralyzed and helpless until a truer knowledge could bring men to closer agreement, until a higher moral standard had set in, until the principles both of those who sought to change and of those who sought to retain could be tested by some system of truer science and philosophy, until, in short, *education* became *general*, and *sound*, and *moral* and *universal*.

I have felt this, and therefore only am I here. In this spirit, for this purpose only, do I suppose that you have come. In this spirit, and this spirit only, let us seek to comprehend the use and meaning of history.

Now, if this is what we mean when we speak of education, let us consider how a knowledge of history forms any part of it, otherwise it will be better to leave it alone. Do we ever ask ourselves why knowledge of any kind is useful? It is not so very easy a matter to give a satisfac-

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tory answer after all. It is certainly not true that a knowledge of facts, as facts, is desirable. Facts are infinite, and it is not the millionth part of them that is worth knowing. What some people call the pure love of truth is after all a very poor affair if we come to think of it. It often means only a pure love of intellectual fussiness. A statement may be true, and yet wholly worthless. It cannot be all facts which are the subject of knowledge. For instance, a man might learn by heart the *Post-Office Directory*, and a very remarkable mental exercise it would be; but he would hardly venture to call himself a well-informed man. No; we want the facts only which add to our power, or will enable us to act. They only give us knowledge—they only are a part of education. For instance, you begin the study of mathematics; of algebra, or geometry. What do you do this for? You hardly expect to turn it to practical account. You are not like Hudibras, who could "tell the clock by algebra," nor do you find Euclid's geometry help you to take the shortest cut to your own house. No, this is not your object. Your object is to know something of the simplest principles which underlie all the sciences. You want to understand practically what mathematical demonstration means. You want to bring home to your minds the conception of scientific axioms. All men count—all men work out calculations—all men measure something. Well, you want to know what this counting means; what rules will serve all calculation and all measurements. You want to know what they call the abstract laws of the human understanding. You want, in short, to improve the mind. Again, you study some of the physical laws of nature; you read or hear plain facts about gravitation, or heat, or light. Well, you don't expect to be able to become a practical discoverer, or to take out a patent for a new balloon, or a new stove, or a new lamp. No, what you want is to be able to know something of what our modern philosophers are talking about. You

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want to know why Faraday is a great teacher. You want to know what it is which seems to affect all nature equally; which brings you down heavily upon the earth if you stumble, and keeps the planets in their orbits. You want to understand what are laws of nature. Again, you want to improve your mind. You take up such pursuits as botany or geology; but then, again, you don't expect to discover a new medicine, or a gold-field, or a coal-mine. No, you want to know something of the mystery around you. You want to see intelligible structure, consistent unity, and common laws in the earth on which we live, with the view, I presume, of feeling more at home in it, of becoming more attached to it, of living in it more happily. Some of you, again, study physiology—that is, you take interest in the structure of the human body, especially of the human brain, and its relation to the body, and its relation to the mind and will. Well, why is this? Again, you do not expect to discover the elixir of life, like an eminent novelist of the day, and you hardly expect to dispense with the aid of the surgeon. Is not the interest you take in all this, that you want to get a glimpse of that marvellous framework of the human form, some notion of the laws of its existence, some idea of the powers which affect it, which depress or develope it, some knowledge of the relation of the thinking and feeling process, and the thinking and feeling organ. Well, then, you seek to know something of the influences to which all human nature is subject, to be able to understand what people mean when they tell you about laws of health, or laws of life, or laws of thought. You want to be in a position to decide for yourself as to the trustworthiness of men upon whose judgment you depend for bodily existence.

Now, in this list of the subjects of a rational education, does it not strike you that something is wanting? Is it not like the old saying about the play of Hamlet with Hamlet left out?

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"The proper study of mankind is man."

And where in this outline is MAN? Does it not strike you that whilst this object is wanting, all the rest remains vague and incomplete, and aimless? For instance, when you are learning arithmetic or geometry, you are not seeking to perform feats of memory. You do not want to turn yourself into one of Babbage's calculating machines. Mathematics would indeed be only a jumble of figures if it ended in itself. But the moment you come to learn the influence which some great discovery has had on the destinies of man; the moment you see, for instance, how all human thought was lighted up when Galileo saw that the sun, and not the earth, was the centre of our world; the moment you feel that the demonstrations of Euclid are things in which all human minds must agree—indeed, are almost the only things in which all do agree—that moment the science has a meaning, and a clue, and a plan. It had none so long as it was disconnected with the history and the destiny of man—the past and the future. It is the same with every other science. What would be the meaning of laws of nature unless by them man could act on nature? What would be the use of knowing the laws of health, unless we supposed that a sounder knowledge of them would ameliorate the condition of men? What, indeed, is the use of the improvement of the mind? It is far from obvious that mere exercise of the intellectual faculties alone is a good. A nation of Hamlets (to take a popular conception of that character) would be more truly miserable, perhaps more truly despicable, than a nation of Bushmen. What, then, is it that we mean when we say a cultivated mind, a mental training, a sound education. We mean, if we mean anything good, a state of mind by which we shall become more clear of our condition, of our powers, of our duties towards our fellows, of our true happiness, by which we may make ourselves better citizens and better men, more forbearing to others, more loyal

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towards true teachers, more zealous for social harmony, more civilized, in short. Well, then, all these preceding studies have been but a preparation, as it were. They have been only to strengthen the mind, and give it material for the true work of education—the inculcation of human duty.

All knowledge, then is imperfect, we may almost say meaningless, unless it tends to give us sounder notions of our human and social interests. And how, then, are we to prepare ourselves for this? What we need, are clear principles about the moral nature of man as a social being; about the elements of human society; about the nature and capacities of the understanding. We want safe landmarks to guide us in our search after worthy guides, or true principles for social or political action. We want, in short, a general clue to public and private conduct. Few here, I imagine, will expect to learn this in any other method than by an acquaintance with human nature. But human nature is unlike physical nature in this, that its varieties are infinitely greater, and that it shows continual change. The earth rolls round the sun in the same orbit now as in infinite ages past; but man moves forward in a straight line of progress. Age after age developes into new phases. It is a study of life, of growth, of variety. One generation shows one faculty of human nature in a striking degree; the next exhibits one different to it. All, it is true, leave their mark upon all succeeding generations, and civilization flows on like a vast river, gathering up the waters of its tributary streams. Hence it is that civilization, being not a fixed or lifeless thing, cannot be studied as a fixed or lifeless subject. We can see it only in its movement and its growth. One year is as good as another to the astronomer, but it is not so to the political observer. He must watch successions, and a wide field, and compare a long series of events. Hence it is that in all political, all social, all human questions whatever, his-

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tory is the main resource of the inquirer. To know what is most really natural to man as a social being, man must be looked at as he appears in a succession of ages, and in very various conditions. To learn the strength or scope of all his capacities together, he must be judged in those successive periods in which each in turn were best brought out. Can any one suppose that he will find all the human institutions and faculties equally well developed, and all in their due proportion and order, by simply looking at the state of civilization now actually around us? Is it not a monstrous assumption that this world of to-day, so full of misery and discontent, strife and despair, ringing with cries of pain, and cries for aid, can really embody forth to us complete and harmonious man? Are there no faculties within him yet fettered, no good instincts stifled, no high yearnings marred? Have we in this year reached the pinnacle of human perfection, lost nothing that we once had, gained all that we can gain? Surely, by the hopes within us, No! And where are they to be found if not in the history of the past? There, in the long struggle of man upwards, we may watch him in his every mood, and see in him often some now forgotten power, capacity, or art yet destined to good service in the future. One by one we may light on the missing links in the chain which connects all races and all ages in one, or gather up the broken threads that must yet be woven into the complex fabric of life.

But there is another side on which history is still more necessary as a guide to consistent and rational action. We not merely need to know what the essential qualities of civilization and of our social nature really are; but we require to know the general course in which they are tending. The more closely we look at it the more distinctly we see that progress moves in a clear and definite path; the development of man is not a casual or arbitrary motion: it moves in a regular and consistent plan. Each part is unfolded

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in due order,—the whole expanding like a single frame. More and more steadily we see each age working out the gifts of the last and transmitting its labours to the next. More and more certain is our sense of being strong only as we wisely use the materials and follow in the track provided by the efforts of mankind. Is it possible to mistake how completely that influence surrounds us. Take our material existence alone. Well, the earth's surface has been made, as we know it, mainly by man. It would be uninhabitable but for the long labours of those who cleared its primeval forests, drained its swamps, first tilled its rank soil. All the inventions on which we depend for existence, the instruments we use were slowly worked out by the necessities of the childhood of the race. We can only modify or add to these. We could not discard all existing machines and construct an entirely new set of industrial implements. Take our political existence. There again we are equally confined in limits. Our country as a political whole has been formed for us by a long series of wars, struggles, and common efforts. We could not refashion England, or divide it in half, if we tried for a century. Our great towns, our great roads, the very local administrations of our counties, were formed for us by the Romans fifteen centuries since. Could we undo it if we tried and make London a country village, or turn Birmingham into the metropolis? Some people think they could abolish some great institution, such as the House of Lords, for instance, if they tried very hard indeed; but few reformers in this country have proposed to abolish the entire British Constitution. Most people look with repugnance on our existing system of the law of real property. Such as it is it was made for us by our feudal ancestors misreading Roman texts. Well, incubus as it is, we must endure it and attempt to improve it. Few people would expect to sweep it away at once as a whole. Turn which ever way you will, we shall find our political systems, laws, and administrations to have been provided for us.

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And is not this the case more strongly in all moral and intellectual questions? Are we to suppose that whilst our daily life, our industry, our laws, our customs, are controlled by the traditions and materials of the past, our thoughts our habits of mind, our beliefs, our moral sense, our ideas of right and wrong, our hopes and aspirations, are not just as truly formed by the civilization in which we have been reared? We are indeed able to transform it, to develope it, and to give it new life and action; but we can only do so as we understand it. Without this all efforts, reforms, and revolutions are in vain. A change is made, but a few years pass over, and all the old causes reappear. There was some unnoticed power which was not touched, and returns in full force. Take an instance from our own history. Cromwell and his Ironsides, who made the great English Revolution, swept Monarchy, and Church, and peers away, and thought they were gone for ever. Their great chief dead, the old system returned like a tide, and ended in the orgies of Charles and James. The Catholic Church has been, as it were, staggering in its last agonies now for many centuries. Luther believed he had crushed it. Long before his time it seemed nothing but a lifeless mass of corruption. Pope after Pope has been driven into exile. Four or five times has the Church seemed utterly crushed. And yet here in this nineteenth century, it puts forth all its old pretensions, and covers its old territory. In the great French Revolution it seemed, for once, that all actual institutions had been swept away. That devouring fire seemed to have burnt the growth of ages to the very root. Yet a few years pass, and all reappear,—Monarchy, and Church, peers, Jesuits, and Prætorian guards. Again and again they are overthrown. Again and again, after seventy years, they rise in greater pomp and pride. Turn to the memory of many of us here. They who, with courage, energy, and enthusiasm, too seldom imitated, once carried the Reform of Parliament and swept away with a strong hand the stronghold of

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abuse and privilege, believed that a new era was opening for their country. What would they think, what do they think, now? When they abolished rotten boroughs, and test acts, and curtailed expenditure, did they think that thirty years would find their descendants wrangling about the purchased votes of some miserable constituency, about church rates, and acts of uniformity, and spending seventy millions a year. Does not the experience of every one who was ever engaged in any public movement whatever remind him that every step made in advance seems too often wrung out from him by some silent and unnoticed power? Has he not felt enthusiasm give way to despair, and hopes become nothing but recollections? What is this unseen power which seems to baffle and undo the best and strongest human efforts, that seems to be an overbearing weight against which no man can long struggle? What is this ever-acting force which seems to revive the dead, to restore what we destroy, to renew forgotten watchwords, exploded fallacies, discredited doctrines, and condemned institutions; against which enthusiasm, intellect, truth, high purpose, and self-devotion seem to beat themselves to death in vain, which breaks the heart of the warm, turns strong brains into peevish criticism, and scatters popular union in angry discord. It is the past. It is the accumulated wills and works of all mankind around us and before us. It is civilization. It is that power which to understand is strength, to repudiate which is weakness. Let us not think that there can be any real progress made which is not based on a sound knowledge of the living institutions, and the active wants of mankind. If we can only act on nature so far as we know its laws, we can only influence society so far as we understand its elements and ways. Let us not delude ourselves into thinking that new principles of policy or social action can be created by themselves or can reconstruct society about us. Those rough maxims, which we are wont to dignify by the name of principles, may be, after

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all, only crude formulas and phrases without life or power. Only when they have been tested, analysed, and compared with other phases of social life, can we be certain that they are immutable truths. Nothing but a thorough knowledge of the social system, based upon a regular study of its growth, can give us the power we require to affect it. For this end we need one thing above all,—we need history.

But perhaps I may be told: Yes, all this may be very useful for statesmen, or philosophers, or politicians; but what is the use of this to the bulk of the people? They are not engaged in solving political questions, or devising schemes to improve society. Well, I am not sure of that. The bulk of the people, if they are seeking to live the lives of rational and useful citizens, if they have any self-respect and self-reliance, if they only wish to do their duty by their neighbours, are really and truly politicians and reformers. They are solving political problems, and are affecting society very deeply. A man does not need even to be a vestryman, he need not even have one out of the 20,000 votes for Marylebone in order to exercise very great political influence. A man, provided he lives like an honest, thoughtful, truth-speaking citizen, is a power in the state. He is helping to form that which rules the state, which rules statesmen, and is above kings, parliaments, or ministers. He is forming *public opinion*. It is on this, a public opinion, wise, thoughtful, and consistent, that the destinies of our country rest, and not on acts of parliament, or movements, or institutions, useful as these often are. He who is forming this is really contributing to the greatness of his country, though timid statesmen dare not trust him with a vote, and ignorant agitators may tell him he is a slave. Every one of us may do this, every one of us may boldly form and utter his opinion. Every one of us may read his newspaper, and may give his voice for the right and against the wrong, a voice which is not lost, though it be not registered on the hustings, or deposited in a ballot-box. Many

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around us are doing this. Many, in a quiet way, not useless, though unseen, are working out some useful social scheme, and supporting some well-meant effort. Many are struggling like men through darkness, through superstition, cant, and intolerance, towards some more wholesome way of truth and life, to find something they can believe, something they can trust, and understand, and live by.

Are there not many amongst us, many here whose lives are spent in searching for light, in battling with old forms of error, in looking for some sound bond of union amongst men? If there are such, I would ask them, how they can hope to succeed unless they start armed with some knowledge of the efforts that men have made towards this end age after age; unless they know something of the systems of faith which, in turn, have flourished and fallen, and know why they flourished and why they failed, and what good end they served, and what evil they produced; unless they know something of the moral and spiritual *history* of mankind? The very condition of success is to recognize the difficulty of the task. The work is half done when men see how much is required to begin. Is it not a sort of presumption to attempt to remodel existing institutions, without the least knowledge how they were formed, or whence they grew; to deal with social questions without a thought how society arose; to construct a social creed without a dream of fifty creeds which have risen and vanished before? Few men would, intentionally, attempt so much; but many do it unconsciously. They think they are not statesmen, or teachers, or philosophers; but, in one sense, they are. In all human affairs there is this peculiar quality. They are the work of the combined labours of many. No statesman or teacher can do anything alone. He must have the minds of those he is to guide prepared for him. They must concur, or he is powerless. In reality, he is but the expression of their united wills and thoughts. Hence it is, I say, that all men need, in some

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sense, the knowledge and the judgment of the statesman and the social teacher. Progress is but the result of our joint public opinion; and for progress that opinion must be enlightened. "He only destroys who can replace." All other progress than this—one based on the union of many minds and purposes, and a true conception of the future and the past—is transitory and delusive. Those who defy this power, the man, the party, or the class who forget it, will be beating themselves in vain against a wall; changing, but not improving; moving, but not advancing; rolling, as the poet says of a turbulent city, like a sick man on the restless bed of pain.

And now, if the value of some knowledge of past history is granted, and I am asked how it is to be acquired, whence it is to come, I admit the difficulty of the question. I know the sea of facts, the libraries of books it opens to the view, yet I do not despair. After all I have said none will suppose I recommend a lifeless catalogue of names, or a dry table of dates. No; it is possible to know something of history without a pedantic erudition. Let a man ask himself always what he wants to know. Something of man's social nature; something of the growth of civilization. He needs only to understand something of the character of the great races and systems of mankind. Let him ask himself what the long ages of early empires did for mankind; whether they established or taught anything; if fifty centuries of human skill, labour, and thought were wasted like an autumn leaf. Let him ask himself what the Greeks taught or discovered. Why the Romans were a noble race, and how they printed their footmarks so deeply on the earth. Let him ask what was the original meaning and life of those great feudal institutions of chivalry and Church, of which we see only the rotting carcases. Let him ask what was the strength, the weakness, and the meaning of the great revolution of Cromwell, or the great revolution in France. A man may learn much

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true history by a little thinking, without any very ponderous books. Let him go to the Museums and see the pictures, the statues, and buildings of Egyptian and Assyrian times, and ask himself what was the state of society under which men in the far East reached so high a pitch of industry, knowledge, and culture, three thousand years before our savage ancestors had learned to use the plough. A man may go to one of our Gothic cathedrals, and seeing there the stupendous grandeur of its outline, the exquisite grace of its design, the solemn and touching expression upon the faces of its old carved or painted saints, kings, and priests; may ask himself if the men who built that could be utterly barbarous, false-hearted, and tyrannical; or if the power which could bring out such noble qualities of the human mind and heart must not have left its trace upon mankind. Indeed, it does not need many books to know something of the life of the past. A man who has enjoyed the best lives in old Plutarch knows not a little of Greek and Roman history. A man who has caught the true spirit of Walter Scott's novels knows something of feudalism and chivalry. But is this enough? Far from it. These desultory thoughts must be connected. These need to be combined into a whole, and combined and used for a purpose. Above all, we must look on history as a whole, trying to find what each age and race has contributed to the common stock, and how and why each followed in its place. Looked at separately, all is confusion and contradiction; looked at as a whole, a common purpose appears. The history of the human race is the history of a growth. It can no more be taken to pieces than the human frame can be taken to pieces. Who would think of making anything of the body without knowing whether it possessed a circulation, a nervous system, or a skeleton. History is a living whole. If one organ be removed, it is nothing but a lifeless mass. What you have to find in it is the relation and connection of the parts. You must learn how age developes into age, how

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country reacts upon country, how thought inspires action, and action modifies thought. Once conceive that all the greater periods of history have had a real and necessary part to fulfil in creating the whole, and you will have done more to understand it than if you had studied some portion of it with a microscope. Once feel that all the parts are needed for the whole, and the difficulty of the mass of materials vanishes. You will come to regard it as a composition or a work of art which cannot be broken up into fragments at pleasure. You would as soon think of dividing it as of taking a figure out of a great picture, or a passage out of a piece of music. Most of you have listened to one of those noble choruses of Handel, such as that "Unto us a son is born," and have heard the opening notes begin simple, subdued, and slow, until they are echoed back in deeper tones, choir answering to choir, voice joining in with voice, growing fuller and stronger with new and varying bursts of melody, until the whole stream of song swells into one vast tide of harmony, and rolls on exulting, wave upon wave in majestic unity and power. Something like this complex harmony is seen in the gathering parts of human history, age taking up the falling notes from age, race joining with race in answering strain, until the separate parts are mingled in one, and pour on in one movement together. Let us shrink from breaking this whole into fragments, nor lose all sense of harmony in attending to the separate notes.

Lastly, if I may give a word of practical advice, there is one mode in which I think history may be most easily and most usefully approached. Let him who desires to find profit in it, begin by knowing something of the lives of great men. Not, I mean, of those most talked about, not of names chosen at hazard; but of the real great ones who can be shown to have left their mark upon distant ages. Know their lives, I mean, not merely as interesting studies of character, or as persons seen in a drama, but

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solely as they represent and influence their age. Not for themselves only must we know them, but as the expression and types of all that is noblest around them. Let us know, then, those whom all men cannot fail to recognize as great —the Cæsars, the Charlemagnes, the Alfreds, the Cromwells, great in themselves, but greater as the centre of the hearts of thousands.

We have done much towards understanding the past when we have learned to value and to honour such men truly. Better to know nothing of history than to know with the narrow coldness of a pedant a record which ought to fill us with emotion and reverence. Of all the faults of the character, surely none is so base as heartless indifference to benefactors. And have we any benefactors like these men? Our closest friends, our earliest teachers, our parents themselves, are not more truly our benefactors than they. To them we owe what we prize most—country, freedom, peace, knowledge, art, thought, and higher sense of right and wrong. Have we received from any services like these; not we only, but all equally in common: and have any services been given at so great a cost? What a long tale of patience, courage, sacrifice, and martyrdom is the history of human progress! Should it not affect us as if we were reading in the diary of a parent the record of his struggles for his children. For us they toiled, endured, bled, and died; that we by their labour might have rest, by their thought might know, by their death might live happily. We know the devotion with which the believers in every creed have felt for the authors of their faith. Intolerant and narrow as this has often been, it yet bears witness to a sense of one of the deepest and best of our emotions. The feeling may become too often partial and bigoted; yet let us beware of neglecting it. Let us dread, above bigotry itself, a temper of irreverence and ingratitude. For whom did these men work, if not for us? Not for themselves, when they gave up peace, honour, life,

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reputation itself—as when the great French republican exclaimed, "May my name be accursed, so that France be free;" not for themselves they worked, but for their cause, for their fellows, for us. Not that they might have fame, but that they might leave the world better than they found it; that there might be more good, less evil, abroad in it; that the good time might come. What else but this supported Milton in his old age, blind, poor, and dishonoured, when he poured out his spirit in solitude, full of grace, tenderness, and hope, amidst the ruin of all he loved and the obscene triumph of all he despised? Or what else supported Dante, the poet of Florence, when an outlaw and an exile he was cast off by friends and countrymen, and wandered about begging his bread from city to city, pondering the great thoughts which live throughout all Europe? Was not this spirit, too, in one, the noblest victim of the French Revolution, the great philosopher Condorcet; who, condemned, hunted to death, dying of hunger and suffering, devoted the last few hours of his life to the service of mankind; and, whilst the pursuers were on his track, wrote in his hiding-place that noble sketch of the progress of the human race.

It would be base indeed to see in this nothing but a selfish love of fame. It was at bottom in them all a native love for right, an inborn desire for the good, the instinct of duty, which possessed them. To us, indeed, no similar powers are given, nor on us are similar tasks imposed. Our path is smooth, because theirs was so rough; our work is easy, because theirs was so hard; yet the work of civilization, of progress, and truth, begun by them, must be carried on by us; by all, not by some; for all, not for some; and will best be carried on by knowing what they have done for us, what they could not do, and why and where they failed.

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LECTURE II.

THE CONNECTION OF HISTORY.

On the last occasion we asked if the history of mankind throughout past ages might not have some meaning and uses for us here to-day? We saw grounds to believe that in its right knowledge, there are some lessons for us all. We saw that our daily life and action in any high sense depends upon our truly comprehending the movement of that great stream of human civilization on which we are borne. We saw that to conceive history aright we must approach it in no pedantic, narrow, or ungenerous spirit. That we must look into it for its mighty deeds and its great men, believing that they who have slowly built up the world of to-day and surrounded our life with infinite creations of thought and toil, wisdom and skill, are worthy of memory, and sympathy, and reverence—a reverence not narrowed to a few ages, or squandered without thought, but one which can reach back into the twilight of our race, and embrace all its true teachers and guides. We saw, too, how history shows us one continuous march of progress, checked and obscured at times, but never stagnant —how age hands on its work to age—nation beckons across sea or desert to its brother nation—race gives to race the choicest product—thinker hands down to thinker ideas and truths long husbanded and stored as heirlooms of mankind, until at last generation after generation, and people with people take up the tale in the yet half-told drama of the world, of which the catastrophe and issue rest with us and our lives.

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Let us now try to sketch the outline of this story, link century to century, continent to continent, and judge the share each has in the common work of civilization. To do so, we must go back to ages long before records began. It is but of the latter and the shorter portion of the duration of progress, that any record has been made or preserved. Yet for a general view materials of certain knowledge exist. If we write the biography of a man we do not begin only with the year of his life in which his diary opens; we seek to know his parentage, education, and early association. To understand him we must do so. So, too, the biography of mankind must not confine itself to the eras of chronological tables, and of recorded specific events. Let us remember also that in all large instances the civilization of an epoch or a people has a certain unity in it—that their philosophy, their policy, their habits, and their religion must more or less accord, and all depend at last upon the special habit of their minds. It is this central form of belief which determines all the rest. Separately no item which makes up their civilization as a whole, can be long or seriously changed. It is what a man believes, which makes him act as he does. Thus shall we see that as their reasoning powers develope all else developes likewise, their science, their art break up or take new forms; their system of society expands; their life, their morality, and their religion gradually are dissolved and reconstructed.

Let us then place ourselves back in imagination at a period when the whole surface of the earth was quite unlike what it is now. Let us suppose it as it was after the last great geologic change—the greater portion of its area covered with primeval forests, vast swamps, dense jungles, and arid deserts. Let us not think the earth had always the same face as now. Such as it is it has been made by man—the rich pasturages and open plains have all been created by his toil—even the grain, and fruits, and

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flowers that grow upon its soil have been made what they are by his care. As yet the now teeming valleys of the great rivers, such as the Nile, or the Euphrates, or the Po, were wildernesses or swamps. The rich meadows of our own island were marshes, where its corn fields stand now were trackless forests. As yet such countries as Holland were swept over by every tide of the sea, and such countries as Switzerland, and Norway, America, or Russia, were submerged beneath endless pine woods. And through these forests and wastes ranged countless races of animals, many, doubtless, long extinct, in variety and numbers more than we can even conceive. And where in this terrible world was man? Scanty, perhaps, in number, confined to a few favourable spots, helpless, dispersed, and alone, man sustained a precarious existence, not yet the lord of creation, inferior to the brutes in strength, only just superior to them in mind,—nothing but the first of the animals. As are the lowest of all savages now, perhaps even lower, man once was. Conceive what Robinson Crusoe would have been had his island been a dense jungle overrun with savage beasts, without his gun, or his knife, or his knowledge, with nothing but his human hand and his human brain. Ages have indeed passed since then—perhaps some twenty thousand years—perhaps far more—have rolled by. But they should not be quite forgotten, and all recollection perish of that dark time when man waged a struggle for life or death with nature. Let us be just even to those who fought that fight with the brutes, hunted down and exterminated step by step the races too dangerous to man, and cleared the ground of these monstrous rivals. Every nation has its primeval heroes, whose hearts quailed not before the lion or the dragon. Its Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord; its Hercules, whose club smote the serpent hydra; its Odin, who slew monsters. The forests, too, had to be cleared. Step by step man won his way into the heart of those dark jungles; slowly the rank vege-

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tation was swept off, here and there a space was cleared, here and there a plain was formed which left a patch of habitable soil. Everywhere man began as a hunter, a savage hunter, of the woods or the wilderness, without implements, without clothing, without homes, perhaps without the use of fire. Man's supremacy over the brutes was first asserted when his mind taught him how to make the rude bow, or the flint knife, or to harden clay or wood by heat. But not only were all the arts and uses of life yet to be found, but all the human institutions had to be formed. As yet language, family, marriage, property, tribe, were not, or only were in germ. A few cries assisted by gesture, a casual association of the sexes, a dim trace of parentage or brotherhood, were all that was. Language, as we know it, has been slowly built up, stage after stage, by the instinct of the entire race. Necessity led to new sounds which use developed, sounds became words, words were worked into sentences, and half-animal cries grew into intelligible speech. We must remember this with gratitude, and with no less gratitude those whose higher instincts first taught them to unite in permanent pairs, to cling to the children of one home, to form into parties and companies, to clothe themselves, and put checks upon the violent passions. Surely they who first drew savage man out of the life of unbridled instinct and brutal loneliness; who first showed the practices of personal decency and cleanliness; who first taught men to be faithful and tender to the young and the old, the woman, and the mother; who first brought these wild hunters together and made them trust each other and their chief—surely these were the first great benefactors of mankind;—surely this is the beginning of the history of the race.

And if this was the material and moral condition of man, what was his intellectual; what was his knowledge, his worship, and his religion? Turn to the earliest traditions of men, to the simple ideas of childhood, and especially to the

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savage tribes we know, and we have the answer. Man's intellect was far feebler than his activity or his feelings. He knew nothing, he rested in the first imagination. He reasoned on nothing, he supposed everything. He looked upon nature, and saw it full of life, motion, and strength. He knew what struggles he had with it, he felt it often crush him, he felt he could often crush it, and he thought that all, brutes, plants, rivers, storms, forests, and mountains, were powers, living, feeling, and acting like himself. Is it hard to conceive this? Do not the primeval legends, the fairy tales of all nations, show it to us? Does not the child punish its doll, and the savage defy the thunder, and the horse start at a gnarled oak swaying its boughs like arms in the wind. Man then looked out upon nature, and thought it a living thing—a simple belief which answered all questions. He knew nothing of matter, or elements, or laws. His celestial and his terrestrial philosophy was summed up in this—things act so because they choose. He never asked why the sun or moon rose and set. They were bright beings who walked their own paths when and as they pleased. He never thought why a volcano smoked, or a river overflowed, or thought only that the one was wroth and roared; and that the other had started in fury from his bed. And what was his religion? What could it but be? Affection for the fruits and flowers of the earth —dread and prostration before the terrible in nature—worship of the bright sun, or sheltering grove or mountain—in a word, the adoration of nature, the untutored impulse towards the master powers around such as we see it in the negro or the Chinese. As yet nothing was fixed, nothing common. Each worshipped in love or dread what most seized his fancy—each family had its own fetishes—each tribe its mountains; often it worshipped its own dead —friends who had begun a new existence. Such was their religion, the unguided faith of childhood, exaggerating all the feelings and sympathies, stimulating love, and hatred,

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and movement, and destruction, but leaving everything vague, giving no fixity, no unity, no permanence. In such a condition, doubtless, man passed through many thousand years, tribe struggling with tribe in endless battles for their hunting grounds, often, we may fear, devouring their captives, without any fixed abode, or definite association, or material progress, yet gradually forming the various arts and institutions of life, gradually learning the use of clothes, of metals, of implements, of speech—a race whose life depended solely upon the chase, whose only society was the tribe, whose religion was the worship of natural objects.

Now in this first struggle with nature man was not alone. Slowly he won over to his side one or two of the higher animals. Was not this a wonderful victory, assuring his ultimate ascendancy? The dog was won from his wolf-like state to join and aid in the chase. The horse bowed his strength in generous submission to a master. Do we reflect enough upon the efforts that this cost? Are we forgetful of the wonders of patience, gentleness, sympathy, sagacity, and nerve, which were required for the first domestication of animals? Do we sufficiently think upon the long centuries of care which were needed to change the very nature of these noble brutes, without whom we should indeed be helpless? By degrees the ox, the sheep, the goat, the camel, and the ass were reared by man, formed part of his simple family, and became the lower portion of the tribe. Their very natures, their external forms were changed. Milk and its compounds formed the basis of food. The hunter's life became less precarious, less rambling, less violent. In short, the second great stage of human existence began, *and pastoral life* commenced. Surely this was a great advance! Larger tribes could now collect, for there was now no lack of food; tribes gathered into a horde; something like society began. It had its leaders, its elders, perhaps its teachers,

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poets, and wise men. Men ceased to rove for ever. They stay upon a favourable pasture for long together. Next property, that is stored up subsistence, began; flocks and herds accumulated; men were no longer torn daily by the wants of hunger; and leisure, repose, and peace were possible. The women were relieved from the crushing toil of the past. The old were no longer abandoned or neglected through want. Reflection, observation, thought began, and with thought religion. As life became more fixed worship became less vague and general. Some fixed great powers alone were adored, chiefly the host of heaven, the stars, the moon, and the great sun itself. Then some elder, freed from toil or war, meditating on the world around him, as he watched the horde start forth at the rising of the sun, the animals awakening and nature opening beneath his rays, first came to think all nature moved at the will of that sun himself, perhaps even of some mysterious power of whom that sun was but the image. From this would rise a regular worship common to the whole horde, uniting them together, explaining their course of life, stimulating their powers of thought. With this some kind of knowledge commenced. Their vast herds and flocks needed to be numbered, distinguished, and separated. Arithmetic began; the mode of counting, of adding and subtracting was slowly worked out. The horde's course, also, must be directed by the seasons and the stars. Hence astronomy began. The course of the sun was steadily observed, the recurrence of the seasons noted. Slowly the first ideas of order, regularity, and permanence arose. The world was no longer a chaos of conflicting forces. The earth had its stated times, all governed by the all-ruling sun. Now, too, the horde had a permanent existence. Its old men could remember the story of its wanderings and the deeds of its mighty ones, and would tell them to the young when the day was over. Poetry, narrative, and history had began. Leisure brought

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the use of fresh implements. Metals were found and worked. The loom was invented; the wheeled car came into use; the art of the smith, the joiner, and the boat-builder. New arts required a subdivision of labour, and division of labour required orderly rule. Society had begun. A greater step was yet at hand. Around some sacred mountain or grove, in some more favoured spot, where the horde would longest halt or oftenest return, some greater care to clear the ground, to protect the pasture, and to tend the plants was shown; some patches of soil were scratched to grow some useful grains, some rude corn ears were cultivated into wheat, the earth began to be tilled. Man passed into the third great stage of material existence, and *agriculture* began. Agriculture once commenced a new era was at hand. Now organized society was possible. Do we estimate duly this the greatest effort towards progress ever accomplished by mankind? Do we remember how much had to be learnt, how many arts had to be invented, before the savage hunter could settle down into the peaceful, the provident, and the intelligent husbandman? What is all our vaunted progress to this great step? What are all our boasted inventions compared with the first great discoveries of man, the spinning-wheel and loom, the plough, the clay-vessel, the wheel, the boat, the bow, the hatchet, and the forge? Surely, if we reflect, our inventions are chiefly modes of multiplying or saving force; these were the transformations of substances, or the interchange of force. Ours are, for the most part, but expansions of the first idea; these are the creations.

Since it is with agriculture that organized society alone can start, it is with justice that the origin of civilization is always traced to those great plains where agriculture alone was then possible. It was in the basins of the great Asian rivers, the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Ganges, and in that of the Nile, that fixed societies began. There, where irriga-

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tion is easy, the soil rich, and country open, cultivation arose, and with cultivation of the soil, the accumulation of its produce, and with more easy sustenance, leisure, thought, and observation. Use taught man to distinguish between matter and life, man and animal, thought and motion. Men's eyes were opened, and they saw that nature was not alive, and had no will. They watched the course of the sun and saw that it moved in fixed ways. They watched the sea, and saw that it rose and fell by tides. Then, too, they needed knowledge and they needed teachers. They needed men to measure their fields, their barns, to teach them to build strongly, to calculate the seasons for them, to predict the signs of the weather, to expound the will of the great powers who ruled them. Thus slowly rose the notion of gods, the unseen rulers of these powers of earth and sky, a god of the sea, of the river, of the sky, of the sun, and between them and their gods rose the first priests, the ministers and interpreters of their will, and polytheism and theocracies began. Thus simply amidst these great settled societies of the plain began the great human institution—the priesthood—at first only some wiser elders who had some deeper knowledge of the arts of settled life. Gradually knowledge advanced; knowledge of the seasons and of the stars or of astronomy, of enumeration or arithmetic, of measurement or geometry, of medicine and surgery, of building, of the arts, of music, of poetry; gradually this knowledge became deposited in the hands of a few, and transmitted and accumulated from father to son. The intellect asserted its power, and the rule over a peaceful and industrious race slowly passed into the hands of a priesthood, or an educated and sacred class. These were the men who founded the earliest form of civilized existence; the most complete, the most enduring, the most consistent of all human societies, the great theocracies or religious societies of Asia and Egypt. Thus for thousands of years before the earliest records of history, in all the great plains of Asia and

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along the Nile, nations flourished in a high and elaborate form of civilization. We will examine one only, the best known to us, the type, the earliest and the greatest—the Egyptian.

The task to be accomplished was immense. It was nothing less than the foundation of permanent and organized society. Till this was done all was in danger. All knowledge might be lost, the arts might perish, the civil community might break up. Hitherto there had been no permanence, no union, no system. What was needed was to form the intellectual and material framework of a fixed nation. And this the Egyptian priesthood undertook. The spot was favourable to the attempt. In that great, rich plain, walled off on all sides by the desert or by the sea, it was possible to found a society at once industrial, peaceful, and settled. They needed judges to direct them, teachers to instruct them, men of science to help them, governors to rule them, preachers to admonish them, physicians to heal them, artists to train them, and priests to sacrifice for them. To meet these wants a special order of men spontaneously arose, by whose half-conscious efforts a complete system of society was gradually and slowly formed. In their hands was concentrated the whole intellectual product of ages, this they administered for the common good. Gradually by their care there arose a system of regular industry. To this end they divided out by their superior skill all the arts and trades of life. Each work was apportioned, each art had its subordinate arts. Then as a mode of perpetuating skill in crafts, to insure a sound apprenticeship of every labour, they caused or enabled each man's work to become hereditary within certain broad limits, and thus created or sanctioned a definite series of castes. Then to give sanction to the whole, they consecrated each labour, and made each workman's toil a part of his religious duty. Then they organized a scheme of general education. They provided a system of teaching common to all, adapted to the work of each. They

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provided for the special education of the sacred class in the whole circle of existing knowledge; they collected observations, they treasured up discoveries, and recorded events. Next they organized a system of government. They established property, they divided out the land, they set up landmarks, they devised rules for its tenure, they introduced law, and magistrates, and governors; provinces were divided into districts, towns, and villages; violence was put down, a strict police exercised, regular taxes imposed. Next they organized a strict system of morality, the social, the domestic, and the personal duties were minutely defined; practices relating to health, cleanliness, and temperance, were enforced by religious obligations, every act of life, every moment of existence was made a part of sacred duty. Lastly, they organized national life by a vast system of common religious rites, by imposing ceremonies which awakened the imagination and kindled the emotions, bound up the whole community into an united people, and gave stability to their national existence, by the awful majesty of a common and mysterious belief.

Do we want to know what such a system of life was like? Let us go into some museum of Egyptian antiquities, where we may see representations of their mode of existence carved upon their walls. There we may see nearly all the arts of life as we know them—weaving and spinning, working in pottery, glass-blowing, building, carving, and painting, ploughing, sowing, threshing, and gathering into barns, boating, irrigation, fishing, wine-pressing, dancing, singing, and playing—a vast community, in short, orderly, peaceful, and intelligent; capable of gigantic works and of refined arts, before which we are lost in wonder; a civilized community busy and orderly as a hive of bees, amongst whom every labour and function was arranged in perfect harmony and distinctness; all this may be seen upon monuments at least 5000 years old.

Here, then, we have civilization itself. All the arts of

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life had been brought to perfection, and indelibly implanted on the mind of men in a way that they could never be utterly lost. All that constitutes orderly government, the institutions of society, had been equally graven into human existence. A check had been placed upon the endless and desultory warfare of tribes; and great nations existed. The ideas of domestic life, marriage, filial duty, care for the aged and the dead, had become a second nature. The wholesome practices of social life, of which we think so lightly, had all been invented and established. The practice of regular holidays, and social gatherings, and common celebrations began—the record and division of past ages, the exact times of the seasons, and of the year, the months, and its festivals; the great yet little prized institution of the week. Nor were the gains to thought less. In the peaceful rolling on of those primeval ages, observations had been stored up by an unbroken succession of priests, without which science never would have existed. It was no small feat in science first to have determined the exact length of the year. It needed observations stretching over a cycle of 1500 years. But the Egyptian priests had enumerated the stars, and could calculate for centuries in advance the times of their appearance. They possessed the simpler processes of arithmetic and geometry; they knew something of chemistry, and much of botany, and even a little of surgery. There was one invention yet more astonishing; the Egyptians invented, the Phenicians perfected, the art of writing, and transmitted the alphabet—our alphabet—to the Greeks. Do we rightly estimate the amazing intellectual effort required for the formation of the alphabet; not to shape the forms, but first to conceive that the sounds we utter could be classified, and reduced down to those simple elements we call the letters. Truly I can imagine hardly any effort of abstract thought more difficult than this, and certainly none more essential to the progress of the human mind.

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They were indeed great minds who did all this; great because they not so much promoted civilization as created it. Never perhaps before or since have single minds ever received this universal culture; never perhaps have shown this many-sided activity and strength. Never before or since has such power been concentrated in the same hands —the entire moral and material control over society. They were great minds, great souls also who could conceive and carry through such a task, greater perhaps in this that they did not care to celebrate themselves for posterity, but passed away when their work was done, contented to have seen it done, as Moses did when he went up alone to die in secret, that no man might know or worship at his tomb. The debt we owe these men and these times is great. It is said that man learns more in the first year of his childhood than in any year subsequently of his life. And in this long childhood of the world, how many things were learnt. Is it clear that they could have been learnt in any other way? Caste, in its decline, is the most degrading of human institutions. Can we be sure that without it the arts of life could have been taught and preserved in those unsettled ages of war and migration. We rebel justly against all priestly tyranny over daily life and customs. Are we sure that without these sanctions of religion and law, the rules of morality, of decency, and health could ever have been imposed upon the lawless instincts of mankind. We turn with repugnance from the monotony of those unvarying ages, and of that almost stagnant civilization; but are we sure that without it, it would have been possible to collect the observations of distant ages, and the records of dynasties and eras on which all science and all history rest: would it have been possible to provide a secure and tranquil field in which the slow growth of language, art, and thought could have worked out generation after generation, their earliest and most difficult result?

No form of civilization has ever endured so long; its

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consequences are stamped deeply still upon our daily life; yet the time came when even these venerable systems must die.

Their work was done, and it was time for them to pass away. Century after century had gone by teaching the same lessons, but adding nothing new. Human life began to be stifled in these primeval forms. The whole empire of the priests grew evil and corrupt. We know them chiefly in their decline, when kings and conquerors had usurped and perverted the patient energies of these long tutored peoples. These great societies passed from industrial and social communities into stupendous tyrannies, made up of cruelty and pride. It was the result of the great and fatal error which lay beneath the whole priestly system. They had misconceived their strength and their knowledge. They had undertaken to organize society whilst their own knowledge was feeble and imperfect. They had tried to establish the rule of mind, of all rules the most certainly destined to fail; and they based that rule upon error and misconception. They pretended to govern society instead of confining themselves to the only possible task, to teach it. They who had begun by securing progress, now were its worst obstacles. They who began to rule by the right of intelligence, now dreaded and crushed intelligence. They fell as every priesthood has fallen, which has ever based its claims upon imperfect knowledge, or pretended to command in the practical affairs of life. Yet there was only one way in which the nightmare of this intellectual and social oppression could be shaken off, and these strong systems broken up. It was no doubt by the all-powerful instinct of conquest, and by the growth of vast military monarchies that the change was accomplished. Those antique societies of peace and industry degenerated at last into conquering empires, and, during 1000 years which precede the Persian empire, Asia was swept from side to side by the armies of Assyrian,

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Median, Babylonian, and Egyptian conquerors. Empire after empire rose and fell with small result, save that they broke the death-like sleep of ages, and brought distant people from the ends of the earth into contact with each other.

The world seemed in danger of perishing by exhaustion. It needed a new spirit to revive it. But now another race appears upon the scene; a branch of that great Aryan people, who from the high lands of central Asia have swept over Assyria, India, and Europe, the people who as Greeks, Romans, Gauls, or Teutons have been the foremost of mankind, of whom we ourselves are but a younger branch. Now, too, the darkness which covered those earlier ages of the world rolls off, and accurate history begins, and the drama proceeds in the broad light of certainty.

It is about 550 B.C. that the first great name in general history appears, and Cyrus founds the Persian empire. For ages along the mountain slopes between the Himalayas and the Caspian Sea, the Persian race had dwelt, a simple race of wandering herdsmen, apart from the vast empires of Babylon and Nineveh in the plains below. There they grew up with nobler and freer thoughts, not crushed by the weight of a powerful monarchy, not degraded by decaying superstitions, nor enervated by material riches. They honoured truth, freedom, and energy. They had faith in themselves and their race. They valued morality more than ceremonies. They believed in a Supreme Power of the universe. Just as the northern nations afterwards poured over the Roman empire, so these stronger tribes were preparing to descend upon the decaying remains of the Asiatic empires. They needed only a captain, and they found one worthy of the task in the great King Cyrus. He, marshalling his mountain warriors into a solid army, swept down upon the plains, and one by one the empires fell before him, until from the Mediterranean to the Indus, from Tartary to the Arabian Gulf, all Asia

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submitted to his sway. His successors continued his work, pushing across Arabia, Egypt, Africa, and Northern Asia itself. There over that enormous tract they built up the Persian monarchy, which swallowed up and fused into one so many ancient empires. The conquerors were soon absorbed, like the Northmen, into the theocratic faith and life of the conquered, and throughout half of the then inhabited globe one rule, one religion, one system of life alone existed. But the Persian kings could not rest whilst a corner remained unconquered. On the shores of the Mediterranean they had come upon a people who had defied them with strange audacity. Against them the whole weight of the Asian empire was put forth. For ten years fleets and armies were preparing. There came archers from the wastes of Tartary and the deserts of Africa; charioteers from Nineveh and Babylon; horsemen, clubmen, and spearmen; the mailclad footmen of Persia; the fleets of the Phenicians; all the races of the East gathered in one vast host, and as men said, 5,000,000 men and 2000 ships poured over the Eastern seas upon the devoted people.

And who were they who seemed thus doomed? Along the promontories and islands of the eastern Mediterranean there dwelt the scattered race whom we call Greeks, who had gradually worked out a form of life totally differing from the old, who had wonderfully expanded the old arts of life and modes of thought. With them the destinies of the world then rested for all its future progress. With them all was life, change, and activity. Broken into sections by infinite bays, mountains, and rivers, scattered over a long line of coasts and islands, the Greek race, with natures as varied as their own beautiful land, as restless as their own seas, had never been moulded into one great solid empire, and early threw off the weight of a ruling caste of priests. No theocracy or religious system of society ever could establish itself amidst a race so full of

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life and motion, so exposed to influences from without, so divided within. They had borrowed the arts of life from the great Eastern peoples, and, in borrowing, had wonderfully improved them. The alphabet, shipbuilding, commerce, they had from the Phenicians; architecture, sculpture, painting from the Assyrian or Lydian empires. Geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, they had borrowed from the Egyptians. The various fabrics, arts, and appliances of the East came to them in profusion across the seas. Their earliest lawgivers, rulers, and philosophers, had all travelled through the great Asian kingdom, and came back to their small country with a new sense of all the institutions and ideas of civilized life. But the Greeks borrowed, they did not imitate. Alone as yet, they had thrown off the tyranny of custom, of caste, of kingcraft, and of priestcraft. They only had moulded the ponderous column and the uncouth colossus of the East into the graceful shaft and the life-like figure of the gods. They only had dared to think freely, to ask themselves what or whence was this earth around, to meet the great problems of abstract thought, to probe the foundations of right and wrong. Lastly, they alone had conceived the idea of a people not the servants of one man or of a class, not chained down in a rigid order of submission, but the free and equal citizens of a republic, for on them had first dawned the idea of a civilized community in which men should be not masters and slaves, but brothers.

On poured the myriads of Asia, creating a famine as they marched, drying up the streams, and covering the seas with their ships. Who does not know the tale of that immortal effort—how the Athenians armed old and young, burned their city, and went on board their ships —how for three days Leonidas and his three hundred held the pass against the Asian host, and lay down, each warrior at his post, calmly smiling in death—how the Greek ships lay in ambush in their islands, for the mighty fleet of

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Persia—how the unwieldy mass was broken and pierced by their dauntless enemy—how, all day, the battle raged beneath the eyes of the great king himself, and, at its close, the seas were heaving with the wrecks of the shattered host. Surely, of all the battles in history, this one of Salamis was the most precious to the human race. No other tale of war can surpass it. Do we enough estimate the heroism, the genius, the marvellous audacity by which these pigmy fleets and armies of a small, weak race, withstood and crushed the entire power of Asia, and preserved from extinction the life and intellect of future ages.

Victory followed upon victory, and the whole Greek race expanded with this amazing triumph. The whole of the old world had been brought face to face with the intellect which was to transform it. The Greek mind, with the whole East open to it, exhibited inexhaustible activity. A century sufficed to develope a thoroughly new phase of civilization. They carried the arts to a height whereon they stand as the types for all time. In poetry they exhausted and perfected every form of composition. In politics they built up a multitude of communities, rich with a prolific store of political and social institutions. Throughout their stormy history stand forth great names. Now and then there arose amongst them leaders of real genius. For a time they showed some splendid instances of public virtue, of social life, patriotism, elevation, sagacity, and energy. For a moment Athens at least may have believed that she had reached the highest type of political existence. But with all this activity and greatness there was no true unity. Wonderful as was their ingenuity, their versatility and energy, it was too often wasted in barren struggles and wanton restlessness. For a century and a half after the Persian invasion, the petty Greek states contended in one weary round of contemptible civil wars and aimless revolutions. One after another they cast their great men aside, to think out by themselves the thoughts that were

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to live for all time, and gave themselves up to be the victims of degraded adventurers. For one moment only in their history, if indeed for that, they did become a nation. At last, wearied out by endless wars and constant revolutions, the Greek states by force and fraud were fused in one people by the half-Greek Macedonian kings, and by them, instead of by true Greeks, the great work so long postponed, but never through their history forgotten, was at length attempted—the work of avenging the Persian invasion, and subduing Asia. Short and wonderful was that career of conquest, due wholly to one marvellous mind. Alexander, indeed, in military and practical genius seems to stand above all Greeks, as Cæsar above all Romans; they two the greatest rulers of the ancient world. No story, perhaps, in history, is so romantic as the tale of that ten years of victory when Alexander, at the head of some thirty thousand veteran Greeks, poured over Asia, crushing army after army, taking city after city, and receiving the homage of prince after prince, himself fighting like a knight-errant: until subduing the Persian empire, and piercing Asia from side to side, and having reached even the great rivers of India, he turned back to Babylon to organize his vast empire, to found new cities, pour life into the decrepit frame of the East, and give to these entranced nations the arts and wisdom of Greece. For this he came to Babylon, but came thither only to die. Endless confusion ensued; province after province broke up into a separate kingdom, and the vast empire of Alexander became the prey of military adventurers. Yet though this attempt of his, like so much else that Greece accomplished, was, indeed, in appearance a disastrous failure, still it had not been in vain. The Greek mind was diffused over the East like the rays of the rising sun when it revives and awakens slumbering nature. The Greek language, the most wonderful instrument of thought ever composed by man, became common to the whole civilized world; it bound together all educated men

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from the Danube to the Indus. The Greek literature, poetry, history, science, philosophy, and art, was at once the common property of the empire. The brilliance, the audacity, the strength of the Greek reasoning awoke the dormant powers of thought. The idea of laws, the idea of states, the idea of citizenship, came like a revelation upon the degenerate slaves of the Eastern tyrannies. Nor was the result less important to the Greek mind itself. Now, at last, the world was open without obstacle. The philosophers poured over the new empire; they ransacked the records of primeval times; they studied the hoarded lore of the Egyptian and Chaldean priests. Old astronomical observations, old geometric problems, long concealed, were thrown open to them. They travelled over the whole continent of Asia, studying its wonders of the past, collecting its natural curiosities, examining its surface, its climates, its production, its plants, its animals, and its human races, customs, and ideas. Lastly, they gathered up and pondered over the half-remembered traditions and the half-comprehended mysteries of Asian belief, the conceptions which had risen up before the intense abstraction of Indian and Babylonian mystics, Jewish and Egyptian prophets and priests, the notion of some great principle or thought, or Being, utterly unseen and unknown, above all gods, and without material form. Thus arose the earliest germ of that spirit which, by uniting Greek logic with Asian or Jewish imaginations, prepared the way for the religious systems of Mussulman and Christian.

Such was the result of the great conquest of Alexander. Not by its utter failure as an empire are we to judge it; not by the vices and follies of its founder, or the profligate orgies of its dissolution, must we condemn it. We must value it as the means whereby the effete world of the East was renewed by the life of European thought, by which the first ideas of nature as a whole and of mankind as a whole, arose, by which the ground was

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first prepared for the Roman empire, and for Christian and Mahometan religion. And, now, what was the gift of Greece to the world? As a nation the Greeks had established little that was lasting. They had changed much; they had organized hardly anything. As the great Asiatic system had sacrificed all to permanence, so the Greek sacrificed all to movement. The Greeks had created no majestic system of law, no solid political order, no complex social system. If civilization had stopped there it would have ended in ceaseless agitation, discord, and dissolution. Their character was wanting in self-command and tenacity, and their genius was too often wasted in intellectual license. Yet if politically they were unstable, intellectually they were great. The lives of their great heroes are their rich legacy to all future ages; Solon, Pericles, Epaminondas, and Demosthenes stand forth as the types of all that is great in the noble leader of men. The story of their best days has scarcely its equal in history. In art they gave us the works of Phidias, the noblest image of the human form ever created by man. In poetry, the models of all time—Homer, the greatest and the earliest of poets; Æschylus the greatest master of the tragic art; Plato, the most eloquent of moral teachers; Pindar, the first of all in lyric art. In philosophy and in science the Greek mind laid the foundations of all knowledge, beyond which, until the last three centuries, very partial advance had been made. Building on the ground prepared by the Egyptians, they did much to perfect arithmetic, raised geometry to a science by itself, and invented that system of astronomy which served the world for fifteen centuries. In knowledge of animal life, and the art of healing they constructed a body of accurate observations and sound analysis; in physics, or the knowledge of the material earth, they advanced to the point at which little was added till the time of Bacon himself. In abstract thought their results were still more surprising. All the

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ideas that lie at the root of our modern abstract philosophy may be found in germ in Greece. The schools of modern metaphysics are little but developments of theirs. They analysed with perfect precision and wonderful minuteness the processes employed in language and in reasoning; they invented grammar and logic, and rhetoric, and music: they correctly analysed the human mind, the character, and the emotions, and invented the science of morality and the art of education; they correctly analysed the elements of society and political life, and invented the science of politics, or the theory of social union. Lastly, they criticized and laid bare all the existing beliefs of mankind; pierced the imposing falsehood of the old religions; meditated on all the various answers ever given to the problem of human destiny, of the universe and its origin, and slowly worked out the conception of unity through the whole visible and invisible universe, which, in some shape or other, has been the belief of man for twenty centuries. Such were their gifts to the world. It was an intellect active, subtle, and real, marked by the true scientific character of freedom, precision, and consistency. And, as the Greek intellect overtopped the intellect of all races of men, and combined in itself the gifts of all others, so were the great intellects of Greece all overtopped and concentrated in one great mind—the greatest, doubtless, of all human minds—the matchless Aristotle; as the poet says, "The master of those who know," who, on all branches of human knowledge, built the strong foundations of abiding truth.

Let us pause for a moment to reflect what point we have reached in the history of civilization. Asia had founded the first arts and usages of material life, begun the earliest social institutions, and taught us the rudiments of science and of thought. Greece had expanded all these in infinite variety and subtlety, had instituted the free state, and given life to poetry and art, had formed fixed

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habits of accurate reasoning and of sytematic observation. Materially and intellectually civilization existed. Yet in Greece we feel that, socially, everything is abortive. The Greeks had not grown into an united nation. They split into a multitude of jealous republics. These republics split into hostile and restless factions. All that we associate with true national existence was yet to come, but the noble race who were to found it had long been advancing towards their high destiny. Alexander, perhaps, had scarcely heard of that distant, half-educated people, who for four centuries had been slowly building up the power which was to absorb and supersede his empire. But far beyond the limits of his degenerate subjects, worthier successors of his genius were at hand—the Romans were coming upon the world. The Greeks founded the city, the Romans the nation. The Greeks were the authors of philosophy, the Romans of government, justice, and peace. The Greek type was thought, the Roman type was law. The Greeks taught us the noble lesson of individual freedom, the Romans the still nobler lesson, the sense of social duty. It is just, therefore, that to the Romans, as to the people who alone throughout all ages gave unity, peace, and order to the civilized world, who gave us the elements of our modern political life, and have left us the richest record of acts of public duty, heroism, and self-sacrifice; it is just that to them we assign the place of the noblest nation in history. That which marks the Roman with his true greatness was his devotion to the social body, his sense of self-surrender to country; a duty to which the claims of family and person were implicitly to yield, which neither death, nor agony, nor disgrace could subdue; which was the only reward, pleasure, or religion which a true citizen could need. This was the greatness, not of a few leading characters, but of an entire people. The Roman state did not give birth merely to heroes, it was formed of heroes; nor were they less marked by their

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sense of obedience, submission to rightful authority where the interest of the state required it, submission to order and law. They had too deeply a sense of justice. They did not war to crush the conquered; once subdued, they dealt with them as their fellows, they made equal laws and a common rule for them; they bound them all into the same service of their common country. Above all other nations in the world they believed in a mission and a destiny. They paused not century after century in one great object. No prize could beguile them, no delusion distract them. Each Roman felt the divinity of the Eternal City, destined always to march onwards in triumph: in its service every faculty of his mind was given; life, wealth, and rest were as nothing to this cause. In this faith they could plan out for the distant future, build up so as to prepare for vast extension, calculate far distant chances, and lay stone by stone the walls of an enduring structure. Hence each Roman was a statesman, for he needed to provide for the future ages of his country; each Roman was a citizen of the world, for all nations were destined to be his fellow-citizens; each Roman could command, for he had learnt to obey, and to know that he who commands and he who obeys are but the servants of one higher power—their common fatherland.

Long and stern were the efforts by which this power was built up. But deep as is the mystery which covers the origin of Rome, we can still trace dimly how, about the centre of the Italian peninsula, along the banks of the Tiber, fragments of two tribes were fused by some heroic chieftain into one; the first more intellectual, supple, and ingenious, the second more stubborn, courageous, and faithful. We see more clearly how this compound people rose through the strength of these qualities of mind and character to be the foremost of the neighbouring tribes; how they long maintained that religious order of society which the Greeks so early shook off; how it moulded all the institutions of their life, filled

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them with reverence for the duties of family, for their parents, their wives, for the memory and the spirit of their dead ancestors, taught them submission to judges and chiefs, devotion to their mother city, love for her commands, her laws, and her traditions, trained them to live and die for her, indeed compassed their whole existence with a sense of duty towards their fellows and each other; how this sense of social duty grew into the very fibres of their iron natures, kept the State through all dangers rooted in the imperishable trust and instinct of a massive people; then how this well-knit race advanced step by step upon their neighbouring tribes, slowly united them in one, gave them their own laws, made them their own citizens; step by step advanced upon the only civilized nation of the peninsula, the theocratic society of Etruria, took from them the arts of war and peace; how the hordes of Northern barbarians poured over the peninsula like a flood, sweeping all the nations below its waters, and when they emerged, Rome only was left strong and confident; how, after four centuries of constant struggle, held up always by the sense of future greatness, the Romans had at length absorbed one by one the leading nations of Italy, and by one supreme effort, after thirty years of war, had crushed their noblest and strongest rivals, their equals in all but genius and fortune, and stood at last the masters of Italy, from shore to shore. And now came the great crisis of their history, the long wars of Rome and Carthage. On one side was the genius of war, empire, law, and art, on the other the genius of commerce, industry, and wealth. The subjects of Carthage were scattered over the Mediterranean, the power of Rome was compact. Carthage fought with regular mercenaries, Rome with her disciplined citizens. Carthage had consummate generals, but Rome had matchless soldiers. Long the scale trembled. Not once nor twice was Rome stricken down to the dust. Punic fleets swept the seas. African horsemen scoured the

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plains. Barbarian hordes were gathered up by the wealth of Carthage, and marshalled by the genius of her great captain. For her fought the greatest military genius of the ancient world, perhaps of all time. Hannibal, himself a child of the camp, training a veteran army in the wars of Spain, led his victorious troops across Gaul, crossed the Alps, poured down upon Italy, struck down army after army, and at last, by one crowning victory, scattered the last military force of Rome. Beset by an invincible army in the heart of Italy, her strongholds stormed, without generals or armies, without money or allies, without cavalry or ships, it seemed the last hour of Rome was come. Now, if ever, she needed that faith in her destiny, the solid strength of her slow growth, and the energy of her entire people. They did not fail her. In her worst need her people held firm, her senate never lost heart, armies grew out of the very remnants and slaves within her walls. Inch by inch the invader was driven back, watched and besieged in turn. The genius of Rome revived in Scipio. He it was who, with an eagle's sight, saw the weakness of her enemy, swooped, with an eagle's flight, upon Carthage herself, and at last, before her walls, overthrew Hannibal, and with him the hopes and power of his country and his race.

It is in these first centuries that we see the source of the greatness of Rome. Then was founded her true strength. What tales of heroism, dignity, and endurance have they not left us! There are no types of public virtue grander than those. Brutus condemning his traitor sons to death; Horatius defending the bridge against an army; Cincinnatus taken from the plough to rule the State, returning from ruling the state again to the plough; the Decii, father and son, solemnly devoting themselves to death to propitiate the gods of Rome; Regulus the prisoner going to his home only to exhort his people not to yield, and returning calmly to his prison; Cornelia offering up her children to death and shame for the cause of the people;

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great generals content to live like simple yeomen; old and young ever ready to march to certain death; hearts proof against eloquence, gold, or pleasure; noble matrons training their children to duty; senates ever confident in their country; generals returning from conquered nations in poverty; the leaders of triumphant armies becoming the equals of the humblest citizens.

Carthage once overcome, the conquest of the world followed rapidly. Spain and the islands of the Mediterranean Sea were the prizes of the war. Lower Gaul, Greece, and Macedon, were also within fifty years incorporated in Rome. She pushed further. The whole empire of Alexander fell into her hands, and at length, after seven hundred years of conquest, she remained the mistress of the civilized world. But, long before this, she herself had become the prey of convulsions. The marvellous empire, so rapidly expanded, had deeply corrupted the power which had won it. Her old heroes were no more. Her virtues failed her, and her vast dominions had long become the prize of bloody and selfish factions. The ancient republic, whose freemen had once met to consult in the Forum, broke up in the new position for which her system was utterly unfit. For nearly a century the great empire had inevitably tended towards union in a single centre. One dictator after another had possessed and misused the sovereign power. At last it passed to the worthiest, and the rule over the whole ancient world came to its greatest name, the noble Julius Cæsar. In him were found more than the Roman genius for government and law, with a gentleness and grace few Romans ever had; an intellect almost Greek in its love of science, of art, in reach and subtlety of thought; and, above all this, in spite of vices and crimes which he shared with his age, a world-wide breadth of view and heart, a spirit of human fellowship and social progress peculiar to one who was the friend of men of different races, countries, and ideas—at once general, orator, poet, historian, ruler, law-

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giver, reformer, and philosopher; in the highest sense the statesman, magnanimous, provident, laborious, large-hearted, affable, resolute, and brave. With him the Roman empire enters on a new and better phase. He first saw and showed how this vast aggregate of men must be ruled no longer as the subjects of one conquering city, but as a real and single State governed in the interest of all, with equal rights and common laws; and Rome be no longer the mistress, but the leader only of the nations. In this spirit he broke with the old Roman temper of narrow nationality and pride; raised to power and trust new men of all ranks and of all nations; opened the old Roman privileges of citizenship to the new subjects; laboured to complete and extend the Roman law; reorganized the administration of the distant provinces; and sought to extinguish the trace of party fury and hatred. And when the selfish rage of the old Roman aristocracy had struck him down, before his work was half complete, by a wanton and senseless murder, yet his work did not perish with him. The Roman empire at last rose to the level which he had planned for it. For some two centuries it did succeed in maintaining an era of progress, peace, and civilization—a government, indeed, at times frightfully corrupt, at times convulsed to its foundations, yet in the main in accordance with the necessities of the times, and rising in its highest types to wise, tranquil, and prudent rule, embracing all, open to all, just to all, and beloved by all. Then it was, during those two centuries, broken as they were by temporary convulsions, that the nations of Europe rose into civilized life. Then the Spaniard, the Gaul, the Briton, the German, the people that dwelt along the whole course of the Rhine and the Danube, first learnt the arts and ideas of life; law, government, society, education, industry, appeared amongst them; and over the tracts of land trodden for so many centuries by rival tribes and devastating hordes, security first appeared, turmoil gave place to repose, and there rose

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the notion, not forgotten for ten centuries, of the solemn Peace of Rome.

And now, what was it that the Roman had given to the world? In the first place, his law—that Roman law, the most perfect political creation of the human mind, which for one thousand years grew with one even and expanding life—the law which is the basis of all the law of Europe, including even our own. Then, the political system of towns. The actual municipal constitution of every town in Western Europe, from Gibraltar to the Baltic, from the Hebrides to Sicily, is but a development of the old Roman city, which lasted through the middle ages, and began modern industrial life. Next, all the institutions relating to administration and police which modern Europe has developed had their origin there. To them in the middle ages men turned when the age of confusion was ending. To them again men turned when the middle ages themselves were passing away. The establishment of elective assemblies, of graduated magistracies, of local and provincial justice, of public officers and public institutions, free museums, baths, theatres, libraries, and schools—all that we understand by organized society, in a word, may be traced back to Rome. Throughout all Western Europe, from that germ, civilization raised its head after the invasion of the Northern tribes. From the same source too arose the force at once monarchic and municipal, which overthrew the feudal system. It was the remnant of the old Roman ideas of provincial organization which first formed the counties and duchies which afterwards coalesced into a State. It was the memory of the Roman township which gave birth to the first free towns of Europe. It was the tradition of a Roman emperor which, by long intermediate steps, transformed the Teutonic chieftain into the modern king or emperor. London, York, Lincoln, Winchester, Gloucester, and Chester were Roman cities, and formed then, as they did for the earlier periods of our his-

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tory, the pivots of our national administration. Paris, Rouen, Lyons, Marseilles, Bordeaux, in France; Constance, Basle, Coblentz, Cologne, upon the Rhine; Cadiz, Barcelona, Seville, Toledo, Lisbon, in the Spanish, Genoa, Milan, Verona, Ravenna, Rome, and Naples, in the Italian peninsula, were in Roman, as in modern times, the great national centres of their respective countries. But, above all else, they gave not the notion merely, but the reality of a state, a permanent system of free obedience to the laws on the one hand, and a temperate administration of them on the other; the constant sense of each citizen having his place in a complex whole.

The Roman's strength was in action, not in thought; but in thought he gave us something besides his special creation of universal law. It was his to discover the meaning of history. Egypt had carved on eternal rocks the pompous chronicles of kings. The Greeks wrote profound and brilliant memoirs. It was reserved to a Roman to conceive and execute the history of his people stretching over seven hundred years, and to give the first proof of the continuity and unity of national life. In art the Roman did little but develope the Greek types of architecture into stupendous and complex forms, fit for new uses, and worthy of his people's grandeur. But the great triumphs of his skill were in engineering. He invented the arch, the dome, and the viaduct. The bridges of the middle ages were studied from Roman remains. The great domes of Italian cathedrals, of which that of our own St. Paul's is but a feeble imitation, were formed directly on the model of a temple at Rome. But in thought, the great gift of Rome was in her language, which has served as an admirable instrument of religious, moral, and political reflection, and forms the base of the spoken dialects of three of the great nations of Europe. Then it was, under that Roman empire, that the stores of Greek thought became common to the world. As the empire of Alexander had shed them

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over the East, the empire of Rome gave them to the West. Greek language, literature, poetry, science, and art, became the common education of the civilized world; and from the Hebrides to the Euphrates, from the Atlas to the Caucasus, for the first and only time in the history of man, Europe, Asia, and Africa formed one vast whole. The union of the oriental half, indeed, was mainly external and material, but throughout the western half a common order of ideas prevailed. Their religion was the belief in many gods—a system in which each of the powers of nature, each virtue, each art, was thought to be the manifestation of some separate god. It was a system which stimulated activity, self-reliance, toleration, sociability, and art, but which left the external world a vague and unmeaning mystery, and the heart of man a prey to violent and conflicting passions. It possessed not that idea of unity which alone can sustain philosophy and science, and alone can establish in the breast a fixed and elevated moral conscience.

The Roman system had its strong points, but it had also the weak. They were in the main three. It was a system founded upon war, upon slavery, upon a false and vague belief. Now as to war, it is most true that war was not then, as in modern times, the monstrous negation of civilization. It seems that by war alone could nations then be pressed into that union which was essential to all future progress. Whilst war was common to all the nations of antiquity, with the Romans alone it became the instrument of progress. The Romans warred only to found peace. They did not so much conquer as incorporate the nations. Not more by the strength of the Roman than by the instinctive submission in the conquered to his manifest superiority, was the great empire built up. Victors and vanquished share in the honour of the common result—law, order, peace, and government. When the Romans conquered, it was once for all. That which once became a province of the Roman empire rested thenceforth in profound tran-

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quillity. No standing armies, no brutal soldiery, overawed the interior or the towns. Whilst all within the circle of the empire rested in peace, along its frontiers stood the disciplined veterans of Rome watching the roving hordes of barbarians, and protecting the pale of civilization.

Still, however useful in its place, it was a system of war; a system necessarily fatal in the long run to all progress, to all industry, to all the domestic virtues, to all the gentler feelings. In a State in which all great ideas and traditions originated in conquest, the dignity of labour, the arts of industry, were but slowly recognised or respected; the work of conquest over, the existence of the great Roman became in too many cases purposeless, idle, and vicious. Charity, compassion, gentleness, were not easy virtues. The home was sacrificed. The condition of woman in the wreck of the family relations sank to the lowest ebb. In a word, the stern virtues of the old Roman private life seemed ending in inhuman ferocity and monstrous debauchery.

Secondly, the Roman was a system of slavery. It existed only for the few. True industry was impossible. The whole industrial class were degraded. The owners of wealth and its producers were alike demoralized. In the great towns were gathered a miserable crowd of poor freemen, with all the vices of the "mean whites" of America. Throughout the country the land was cultivated, not by a peasantry, not by scattered labourers, but by gangs of slaves, guarded in workhouses and watched by overseers. Hence the whole population and all civilization was gathered in the towns. The spaces between and around them were wildernesses, with pasturage and slaves in place of agriculture and men. Thirdly, it was a system based on a belief in a multitude of gods, a system without truth, or coherence, or power. There was no single belief to unite all classes in one faith. Nothing ennobling to trust in, no standard of right and wrong which could act on the moral

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nature. There were no recognised teachers. The moral and the material were hopelessly confused. The politicians had no system of morality, religion, or belief, and were void of moral authority. The philosophers and the moralists were hardly members of the State, and taught only to a circle of admirers, and exercised no wide social influence. The religion of the people had long ceased to be believed. It had long been without any moral purpose; it became a vague mass of meaningless traditions. With these threefold sources of corruption, war, slavery, false belief, the Roman empire so magnificent without, was, within, a rotten fabric. Politically vigorous, morally it was diseased. Never perhaps has the world witnessed cases of such stupendous moral corruption, as when immense power, boundless riches, and native energy were left as they were then without object, control, or shame. Then, from time to time, there broke forth a very orgy of wanton strength. But its hour was come. The best spirits were all filled with a sense of the hollowness and corruption around them. Statesmen, poets, and philosophers, in all these last eras were pouring forth their complaints and fears, or feebly attempting remedies. The new element had long been making its way unseen, had long been preparing the ground, and throughout the civilized world there was rising up a groan of weariness and despair.

For three centuries a belief in the existence of one God alone, in whom were concentrated all power and goodness, who cared for the moral guidance of mankind, a belief in the immortality of the soul and its existence in another state, had been growing up in the minds of the best Greek thinkers. The noble morality of their philosophers had taken strong hold of the higher consciences of Rome, and had diffused amongst the better spirits throughout the empire new and purer types. Next the great empire itself, forcing all nations in one State, had long inspired in its worthiest members a sense of the great brotherhood

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of mankind, had slowly mitigated the worst evils of slavery, and paved the way for a religious society. Thirdly, another and a greater cause was at work. Through Greek teachers the world had long been growing familiar with the religious ideas of Asia, its conceptions of a superhuman world, of a world of spirit, angel, demon, future state, and overruling Creator, with its mystical imagery, its spiritual poetry, its intense zeal and fervent emotion. And now, partly from the contact with Greek thought and Roman civilization, a great change was taking place in the very heart of that small Jewish race, of all the races of Asia known to us, the most intense, earnest, and pure: possessing a high sense of personal morality, the truest yearnings of the heart, and the deepest capacity for spiritual fervour. In their midst arose a fellowship of true-hearted brethren, gathered around one noble and touching character, which adoration has veiled in a mystery which passes from the pale of definite history. On them had dawned the vision of a new era of their national faith, which should expand the devotion of David, the high purpose of Isaiah, and the moral excellence of Samuel, into a gentler, wider, and more loving spirit.

How this new idea grew to the height of a new religion, and brightened, and was shed over the whole earth by the strength of its intensity and its purity, is to us a familiar and enchanting tale. We know how the first fellowship of the brethren met; how they went forth into all lands with words of mercy, love, justice, and hope; their self-denial, humility, and zeal; their heroic lives and awful deaths; their loving natures and their noble purposes; how they gathered around them wherever they came the purest and greatest; how across mountains, seas, and continents, the communion of saints joined in affectionate trust; how from the deepest corruption of the heart arose a yearning for a truer life; how the new faith, ennobling the instincts of human nature, raised up the slave, the poor, and the

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humble to the dignity of common manhood, and gave new meaning to the true nature of womanhood; how, by slow degrees, the church, with its rule of right, of morality, and of communion, arose; how the first founders and apostles of this faith lived and died, and all their gifts were concentrated in one, of all the characters of certain history doubtless the loftiest and purest,—the unflinching, the unselfish, the great-hearted, the loving Paul.

But deeply as this story must always interest us, let us not forget that the result was due not to one man or to one people, that each people gave their share to the whole; Greece, her thought and gentleness; Rome, her social instinct, her genius for discipline; Asia, her intensity of belief and personal morality. The task that lay before the new religion was immense. It was, upon a uniform faith, to found a system of sound and common morality, to reform the deep-rooted evils of slavery; to institute a method which should educate, teach, and guide, and bring out the tenderer and higher instincts of our nature. The powers of mind and of character had been trained by Greece and Rome, to the Christian church came the loftier mission of ruling the affections and the heart.

From henceforth the history of the world shows a new character.

Now and henceforward we see two elements in civilization working side by side—the practical and the moral. There is now a system to rule the State and a system to act upon the mind; a body of men to educate, to guide and elevate the spirit and the character of the individual, as well as a set of rulers to enforce the laws and direct the action of the nation. There is henceforward the State and the Church. Hitherto all had been confused; statesmen were priests and teachers; public officers pretended to order men's lives by law, and pretended in vain. Henceforward our view is fixed on Europe, on Western Europe alone: we leave aside the East, we leave the half Romanized, the

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half Christianized East to the empire of Mohammed, to the Arab, the Mongol, and the Turk. We turn solely to the heirs of time, the West, in which is centred the progress and the future of the race. Henceforward, then, for the ten centuries of the middle ages which succeeded in Western Europe the fall of the Roman Empire, we have two movements to watch together—Feudalism and Catholicism—the system of the State and the system of the Church: let us turn now to the former.

The vast empire of Rome broke up with prolonged convulsions. Its concentration in any single hand, however necessary as a transition, became too vast as a permanent system. It wanted a rural population; it was wholly without local life. Long the awe-struck barbarians stood pausing to attack. At length they broke in. Ever bolder and more numerous tribes poured onwards. In wave after wave they swept over the whole empire, sacking cities, laying waste the strongholds, at length storming Rome itself; and laws, learning, industry, art, civilization itself, seem swallowed up in the deluge. For a moment it appeared that all that was Roman had vanished. It was submerged, but not destroyed. Slowly the waters of this overwhelming invasion abate. Slowly the old Roman towns and their institutions begin to appear above the waste like the highest points of a flooded country. Slowly the old landmarks re-appear and the forms of civilized existence. Four centuries were passed in one continual ebb and flow; but at length the restless movement subsided. One by one the conquering tribes settled, took root, and occupied the soil. Step by step they learned the arts of old Rome. At length they were transformed from the invaders into the defenders. King after king strove to give form to the heaving mass, and put an end to this long era of confusion. One, at length, the greatest of them all, succeeded, and reared the framework of modern Europe. It was the imperial Charlemagne, the greatest name of the middle ages,

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who, like some Roman emperor restored to life, marshalled the various tribes which had settled in France, Germany, Italy, and the north of Spain, into a single empire, beat back, in a long life of war, the tide of invaders on the west, and north, and south, Saxon, Northman, and Saracen, and awakened anew in the memory of nations the type of civil government and organized society. His work in itself was but a single and a temporary effort; but in its distant consequences it has left great permanent effects. It was like a desperate rally in the midst of confusion; but it gave mankind time to recover much that they had lost. In his empire may be traced the nucleus of the state system of Western Europe; by the traditions of his name, the modern monarchies were raised into power. He too gave shape and vigour to the first efforts of public administration. But a still greater result was the indirect effect of his life and labours. It was by the spirit of his established rule that the feudal system which had been long spontaneously growing up from beneath the *débris* of the Roman empire, first found strength to develope into a methodical form, received an imperial sanction to its scheme, and the type of its graduated order of rule. And now what was this feudal system, and what were its results?

In the first place, it was a system of local defence. The knight was bound to guard his fee, the baron his barony, the count his county, the duke his duchy. Then it was a system of local government. The lord of the manor had his court of justice, the great baron his greater court, and the king his court above all. Then it was a system of local industry; the freeholder tilled his own fields, the knight was responsible for the welfare of his own lands. The lord had an interest in the prosperity of his lordship. Hence slowly arose an agricultural industry, impossible in any other way. The knight cleared the country of robbers, or beat back invaders, whilst the husbandman ploughed beneath his castle walls. The nation no longer, as under

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Greece and Rome, was made up of scattered towns. It had a local root, a rural population, and complete system of agricultural life. The monstrous centralization of Rome was gone, and a local government began. But the feudal system was not merely material, it was also moral; not simply political, it was social also. The whole of society was bound by it together by a long series of gradations. Each man had his due place and rank, his rights, and his duties. The knight owed protection to his men; his men owed their services to him. Under the Roman system, there had been only citizens and slaves. Now there was none so high but had grave duties to all below; none so low, not the meanest serf, but had a claim for protection. Hence, all became, from king to serf, recognised members of one common society. Thence sprung the closest bond which has ever bound man to man. To the noble natures of the northern invaders was due the new idea of loyalty, the spirit of truth, faithfulness, devotion, and trust, the lofty sense of honour which bound the warrior to his captain, the vassal to his lord, the squire to his knight. It ripened into the finest temper which has ever ennobled the man of action, the essence of chivalry; in its true sense not dead, not destined to die,—the temper of mercy, courtesy, and truth, of fearlessness and trust, of a generous use of power and strength, of succour to the weak, comfort to the poor, reverence for age, for goodness, and for woman; which revolts against injustice, oppression, and untruth, and never listens to a call unmoved. Is it possible that this spirit is dead? This which watched the cradle of modern society, and is the source of all our poetry and art, does it not live for future service, and new beauty, transformed from a military to a peaceful society? May it not revive the seeds of trust and duty between man and man, inspire the labourer with dignity and generosity, raise the landlord to a consciousness of duty, and renew the mysterious bond which unites all those who labour in a common work?

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We turn to the Church, the moral element which pervades the middle ages. Amidst the crash of the falling empire, as darker grew the storm which swept over the visible state on earth, more and more the better spirits turned their eyes towards a kingdom above the earth. They turned, as the great Latin father relates, amidst utter corruption to an entire reconstruction of morality; in the wreck of all earthly greatness, they set their hearts upon a future life, and strove amidst anarchy and bloodshed to found a moral union of society. Hence rose the Catholic Church, offering to the thoughtful a mysterious and inspiring faith; to the despairing and the remorseful a new and higher life; to the wretched comfort, fellowship, and aid; to the perplexed a grand system of belief and practice—in its creed Greek, in its worship Asiatic, in its constitution Roman. In it we see the Roman genius for organisation and law, transformed and revived. In the fall of her material greatness Rome's social greatness survived. Rome still remained the centre of the civilized world. Latin was still the language which bound men of distant lands together. From Rome went forth the edicts which were common to all Europe. The majesty of Rome was still the centre of civilization. The bishops' court took the place of that of the imperial governor. The peace of the Church took the place of the peace of Rome. The barbarian invaders who overthrew the hollow greatness of the empire, humbled themselves reverently before the ministers of religion. The Church stood between the conqueror and the conquered, and joined them both in one. She told to all—Roman and barbarian, slave or freeman, great or weak—how there was one God, one Saviour of all, one equal soul in all, one common judgment, one common life hereafter. She told them how all, as children of one Father, were in His eyes equally dear; how charity, mercy, humility, devotion alone would make them worthy of His love; and at these words there rose up in the fine spirits of the new races a

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sense of brotherhood amongst mankind, a desire for a higher life, a zeal for all the gentler qualities and the higher duties, such as the world had not seen before. Thus was her first task accomplished, and she founded a system of morality common to all and possible to all. She spoke to the slave of his immortal soul, to the master of the guilt of slavery. Master and slave should meet alike within her walls, and lie side by side within her tomb; and thus her second task was accomplished, and she overthrew for ever the system of slavery, and raised up the labourer into the dignity of a citizen. Then she told how their common Master, of power unbounded, had loved the humble and the weak. She told of the simple lives of saints and martyrs, their tender care of the poorer brethren, their spirit of benevolence, self-sacrifice, and self-abasement; and thus the third great task was accomplished, when she placed the essence of practical religion in care for the weak, in affection for the family, in reverence for woman, in benevolence to all, and in personal self-denial. Next, she undertook to educate all alike. She provided a body of common teachers; she organized schools; she raised splendid cathedrals, where all might be brought into the presence of the beautiful, and see all forms of art in their highest perfection—architecture, and sculpture, and painting, and work in glass, in iron, and in wood, heightened by inspiring ritual and touching music. She accepted all without thought of birth or place. She gathered to herself all the knowledge of the time, though all was subordinate to religious life. The priests, so far as such were needed, were poets, historians, dramatists, musicians, architects, sculptors, painters, judges, lawyers, magistrates, ministers, students of science, engineers, philosophers, astronomers, and moralists. Lastly, she had another task, and she accomplished even that. It was to stand between the tyrant and his victim; to succour the oppressed, to humble the evil ruler, to moderate the horrors of war; above all, to join nation to nation, to

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mediate between hostile races, to give to civilized Europe some element of union and cohesion.

Let us think of it as it was in its glory, not in its decay. Let us remember it as a system of life which for ten centuries possessed the passionate devotion of the foremost spirits of their time; one which has left us a rich store of thought and teaching, of wise precept, lofty poetry, and matchless devotion; as a system which really penetrated and acted on the lives of men. Let us think of it as it was in essence, truly the union of all the men of intellect and character of their age towards one common end; not like Egyptian priests, pretending to govern by law; not like Greek philosophers, expounding to a chosen sect; not like modern *savants*, thinking for mere love of thought, or mere love of fame, without method or concert, without moral guidance, without social purpose; but a system in which the wisest and the best men of their day, themselves reared in a common teaching, organized on a vast scale, and directed by one general rule, devoted the whole energies of their brains and hearts in unison together, to the moral guidance of society; sought to know only that they might teach, to teach only to improve, and lived only to instruct, to raise, to humanize their fellow men. Let us think of it thus as it was at its best; and in this forget even the cruelty, the imposture, and the degradation of its fall; let horror for its vices and pity for its errors be lost in one sentiment of admiration, gratitude, and honour, for this the best and the last of all the organized systems of human society; of all the institutions of mankind, the most worthy of remembrance and regret.

But if we are generous in our judgment let us be just. The Catholic system ended, it is most true, in disastrous and shameful ruin. Excellent in intention and in method, it was from the first doomed to inevitable corruption from the inherent faults of its constitution. It had worthily trained and elevated the noblest side of human nature—the reli-

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gious, the moral, and the social instincts of our being; and the energy with which it met this the prime want of men, upheld it through the long era of its corruption, and still upholds it in its last pitiable spasm. But with the intellectual and with the practical sphere of man's life, it was by its nature incompetent to deal. In its zeal for man's moral progress it had taken its stand upon a false and even a preposterous belief. Burning to subdue the lower passions of man's nature, it had vainly hoped to crush the practical instincts of his activity. It discarded with disdain the thoughts and labours of the ancient world. It proclaimed as the ideal of human life, a visionary and even a selfish asceticism. For a period, for a long period, its transcendent and indispensable services maintained it in spite of every defect and vice; but at last the time came when the outraged instincts reasserted their own, and showed how hopeless is any religion or system of life not based on a conception of human nature as a whole at once complete and true. The Church began in indifference towards philosophy and contempt for material improvement. Indifference and contempt passed at length into hatred and horror; and it ended in denouncing science, and in a bitter conflict with industry. At last it had become, in spite of its better self, the enemy of all progress, all thought, all industry, all freedom. It allied itself with all that was retrograde and arbitrary. It fell from bad to worse, and settled into an existence of timid repression. Hence it came that the Church, attempting to teach upon a basis of falsehood, to direct man's active life upon a merely visionary creed, to govern a society which it only half understood, succeeded only for a time. It was scarcely founded before it began to break up. It had scarcely put forth its strength before it began to decay. It stood like one of its own vast cathedrals, building for ages yet never completed; falling to ruin whilst yet unfinished; filling us with a sense of beauty and of failure; a monument of noble design and misdirected strength. It fell like

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the Roman empire, with prolonged convulsion and corruption, and left us a memory of cruelty, ignorance, tyranny, rapacity and vice, which we too often forget were but the symptoms and consequences of its fall.

And now we have stood beside the rise and fall of four great stages of the history of mankind. The priestly systems of Asia, the intellectual activity of Greece, the military empire of Rome, the moral government of Catholicism, had each been tried in turn, and each had been found wanting. Each had disdained the virtues of the others; each had failed to incorporate the others. With the fall of the Catholic and feudal system, we enter upon the age of modern society. It is an age of dissolution, reconstruction, variety, movement, and confusion. It is an era in which all the former elements re-assert themselves with new life, all that had ever been attempted is renewed again; an era of amazing complexity, industry, and force, in which every belief, opinion, and idea is criticised, transformed, and expanded. Every institution of society and habit of life is thoroughly unsettled and remodelled; all the sciences constructed—art, industry, policy, religion, philosophy, and morality, developed with a vigorous and constant growth; but, withal, it is an era in which all is individual, separate, and free, without any system, or regularity, or unity, or harmony.

First, the feudal system broke up under the influence of the very industry which it had itself fostered and reared. The great fiefs as they became settled, gradually gathered into masses; one by one they fell into the hands of kings, and at length upon the ruins of feudalism arose the great monarchies, and the feudal atoms crystallized into the actual nations of Europe. The variety and dispersion of the feudal system vanished. A central monarch established one uniform order, police, and justice; and modern political society, as we know it rose. The invention of gunpowder made the knight helpless, the bullet pierced his mail, and

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standing armies took the place of the feudal militia. The discovery of the compass opened the ocean to commerce. The free towns expanded with a new industry, and covered the continent with infinitely varied products. The knight became the landlord, the man-at-arms became the tenant, the serf became the free labourer, and the emancipation of the worker, the first, the greatest victory of the Church was complete.

Thus, at last, the energies of men ceased to be occupied by war, to which a small section of the society was permanently devoted. Peace became in fact the natural, not the accidental state of man. Society passed into its final phase of industrial existence. Peace, industry, and wealth again gave scope to thought. The riches of the earth were ransacked, new continents were opened, intercourse increased over the whole earth. Greeks, flying from Constantinople before the Turks, spread over Europe, bringing with them books, instruments, inscriptions, gems, and sculptures; the science, the literature, and the inventions of the ancient world, long stored up and forgotten on the shores of the Bosphorus. Columbus discovered America. The Portuguese sailed round Africa to India; a host of daring adventurers penetrated untrodden seas and lands; man entered at last upon the full dominion of the earth. Copernicus and Galileo unveiled the mystery of the world, and made a revolution in all thought. Mathematics, chemistry, botany, and medicine, preserved mainly by the Arabs during the middle ages, were again taken up almost where the Greeks had left them. The elements of the material earth were eagerly explored. The system of experiment (which Bacon reduced to a method) was worked out by the common labour of philosophers and artists. For the first time the human form was dissected and explored. Physiology, as a science, began. Human history and society became the subject of regular and enlightened thought. Politics became a branch of philosophy. With

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all this the new knowledge was scattered by the printing-press, itself the product and the stimulus of the movement, in a word, the religious ban was raised from off the human powers. The ancient world was linked on to the modern. Science, speculation, and invention lived again after twelve centuries of trance. A fresh era of progress opened with the new-found treasures of the past.

Next, before this transformation of ideas, the Church collapsed. Its hollow dogmas were exposed, its narrow prejudices ridiculed, its corruptions probed. Mens' consciences and brains rose up against an institution which pretended to teach without knowledge, and to govern though utterly disorganized. Convulsion followed on convulsion; the struggle we call the Reformation opened, and for a century and a half shook Europe to its foundations. At the close of this long era of massacre and war, it was found that the result achieved was small indeed. Europe had been split into two religious systems, of which neither one nor the other was fit for its duty. Admiration for the noble characters of the first Reformers, for their intensity, truth, and zeal, their heroic lives and deaths, the affecting beauty of their purposes and hopes is yet possible to us, whilst we confess that the Protestant, like the Catholic faith, had failed to organize human industry, society, and thought; that both were alike hollow, bigoted, and weak, and both had failed to satisfy the wants and hopes of man. More and more has thought and knowledge grown into even fiercer conflict with authority of Book or Pope; more and more in Catholic France as in Protestant England, does the moral guidance of men pass from the hands of priests, or sect, to be assumed, if it be assumed at all, by the poet, the philosopher, the essayist, and even the journalist; more and more does Church and sect stand dumb and helpless in presence of the evils with which society is rife.

Side by side the religious and the political system tottered in ruin together. From the close of the fifteenth

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century, now one, now the other was furiously assailed. For the most part both were struck at once. The long religious wars of Germany and France; the heroic defence of the free Republic of Holland against the might of Spain; the glorious repulse of its Armada by England; the immortal revolution achieved by our greatest stateman, Cromwell; the struggle of his worthy successor, William of Orange, against the oppression of Louis XIV., were all but parts of one long struggle, which lasted during the whole of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a struggle in which religion and politics both equally shared, a struggle between the old powers of Feudalism and Catholicism on the one side, with all the strength of ancient systems, against the half-formed, ill-governed force of freedom, industry, and thought; a long and varied struggle in which aristocracy, monarchy, privileged caste, arbitrary and military power, church formalism, dogmatism, superstition, narrow teaching, visionary worship, and hollow creeds, were each in turn attacked, and each in turn prostrated.

A general armistice followed this long and exhausting struggle. The principles of Protestantism, Constitutionalism, Toleration, and the balance of power, established a system of compromise, and for a century restored some order in the political and religious world. But in the world of ideas the contest grew still keener. Industry expanded to incredible proportions, and the social system was transformed before it. Thought soared into unimagined regions, and reared a new realm of science, discovery, and art. Wild social and religious visions arose and passed through the conscience of mankind. At last the forms and ideas of human life, material, social, intellectual, and moral, had all been utterly transformed, and the fabric of European society rested in peril on the crumbling crust of the past. The great convulsion came. The gathering storm of centuries burst at length in the French Revolution. Then, indeed, it seemed that chaos was come again. It was as if

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an earthquake had come, blotting out all trace of what had been, engulfing the most ancient structures, destroying all former landmarks, and scattering society in confusion and dismay. It spreads from Paris through every corner of France, from France to Italy, to Spain, to Germany, to England; it pierces, like the flash from a vast storm-cloud, through every obstacle of matter, space, or form. It kindles all ideas of men, and gives wild energy to all purposes of action. For though terrible it was not deadly. It came not to destroy but to construct, not to kill but to give life. And through the darkest and bloodiest whirl of the chaos there rose up clear on high, before the bewildered eyes of men, a vision of a new and greater era yet to come—of brotherhood, of freedom, and of union, of never ending progress, of mutual help, trust, co-operation, and goodwill; an era of true knowledge, of real science, and practical discovery; but, above all, an era of active industry for all; of the dignity, and consecration of labour, of a social life, just to all, common to all, and beneficent to all.

That great revolution is not ended. The questions it proposed are not yet solved. We live still in the heavings of its shock. It yet remains with us to show how the last vestiges of the feudal, hereditary, and aristocratic systems may give place to a genuine, an orderly, and permanent republic; how the trammels of a faith long grown useless and retrograde may be removed without injury to the moral, religious, and social instincts, which are still much entangled in it; how industry may be organized, and the workman enrolled with full rights of citizenship, a free, a powerful, and a cultivated member of the social body. Such is the task before us. The ground is all prepared, the materials are abundant and sufficient. We have a rich harvest of science, a profusion of material facilities, a vast collection of the products, ideas, and inventions of past ages. Every vein of human life is full; every faculty has

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been trained to full efficiency; every want of our nature is supplied. We need now only harmony, order, union; we need only to group into a whole these powers and gifts; the task before us is to discover some complete and balanced system of life; some common basis of belief; some object for the imperishable religious instincts and aspirations of mankind; some faith to bind the existence of man to the visible universe around him; some common social end for thought, action, and feeling; some common ground for teaching, studying, or judging. We need to extract the essence of all older forms of civilization, to combine them, and harmonize them in one, a system of existence which may possess something of the calm, the completeness, and the symmetry of the earliest societies of men; the zeal for truth, knowledge, science, and improvement, which mark the Greek, with something of his grace, his life, his radiant poetry and art; the deep social spirit of Rome, its political sagacity, its genius for government, law and freedom, its noble sense of public life; above all else, the constancy, earnestness, and tenderness of the mediæval system; its sense of the surrender of self to a Power above, its undying zeal for the spiritual union of mankind:—and with all this the industry, the knowledge, the variety, the activity, of modern life.

THE END.

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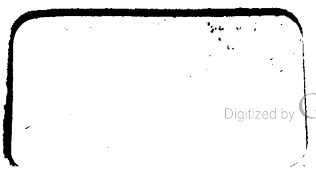

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